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The Shorter Works of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu - 1868-1870

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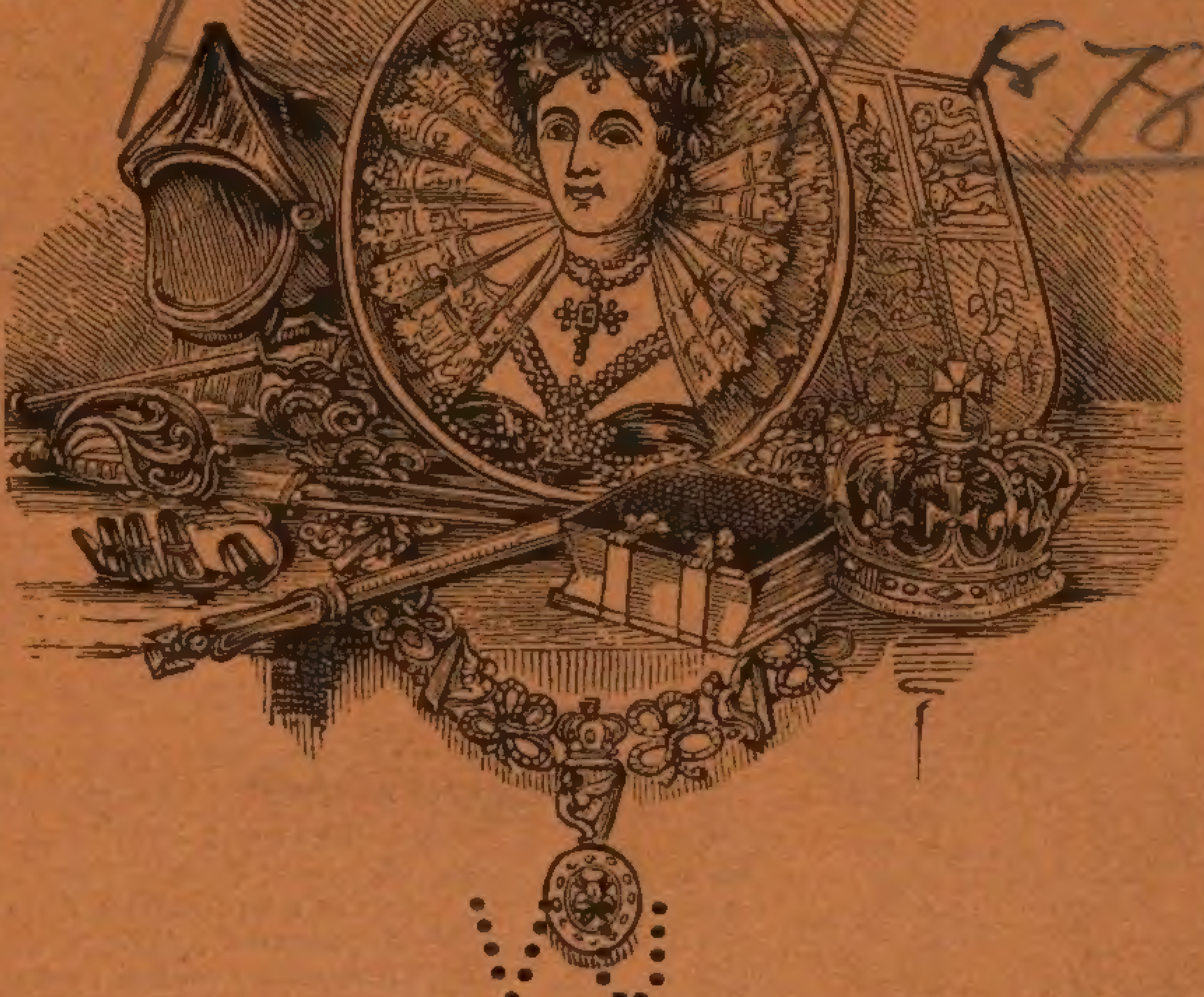

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Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (from periodicals as noted)

Squire Toby's Will 1868 (v22 Jan) Temple Bar
Edmund Burke 1868 (v71 May) Dublin University Magazine
Irish Land "Pacification" 1868 (v71 June) Dublin University Magazine
Green Tea 1869 (n.s. v2 Oct 23-Nov 13) All the Year Round
The Legend of Dunblane 1869 (n.s. v2 Nov 20-27) All the Year Round
The Child That Went with the Fairies 1870 (n.s. v3 Feb 5) All the Year Round
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Stories of Lough Guir 1870 (n.s. v3 Apr 23) All the Year Round
The Bird of Passage: A Tale 1870 (v29 Apr-June) Temple Bar
Checkmate 1870-71 (n.s. v2 June-Feb) Cassell's Magazine
The Haunted Baronet 1870 (v12 July-v 13 Nov) Belgravia

Squire Toby's Will.

A GHOST STORY.

MANY persons accustomed to travel the old York and London road, in the days of stage-coaches, will remember passing, in the afternoon, say, of an autumn day, in their journey to the capital, about three miles south of the town of Applebury, and a mile and a half before you reach the old Angel Inn, a large black-and-white house, as those old-fashioned cage-work habitations are termed, dilapidated and weather-stained, with broad lattice windows glimmering all over in the evening sun with little diamond panes, and thrown into relief by a dense background of ancient elms. A wide avenue, now overgrown like a churchyard with grass and weeds, and flanked by double rows of the same dark trees, old and gigantic, with here and there a gap in their solemn files, and sometimes a fallen tree lying across on the avenue, leads up to the hall-door.

Looking up its sombre and lifeless avenue from the top of the London coach, as I have often done, you are struck with so many signs of desertion and decay; the tufted grass sprouting in the chinks of the steps and window-stones, the smokeless chimneys over which the jackdaws are wheeling, the absence of human life and all its evidences, that you conclude at once that the place is uninhabited and abandoned to decay. The name of this ancient house is Gylingden Hall. Tall hedges and old timber quickly shroud the old place from view, and about a quarter of a mile further on you pass, embowered in melancholy trees, a small and ruinous Saxon chapel, which, time out of mind, has been the burying-place of the family of Marston, and partakes of the neglect and desolation which brood over their ancient dwelling-place.

The grand melancholy of the secluded valley of Gylingden, lonely as an enchanted forest, in which the crows returning to their roosts among the trees, and the straggling deer who peep from beneath their branches, seem to hold a wild and undisturbed dominion, heightens the forlorn aspect of Gylingden Hall.

Of late years repairs have been neglected, and here and there the roof is stripped, and "the stitch in time" has been wanting. At the side of the house exposed to the gales that sweep through the valley like a torrent through its channel, there is not a perfect window left, and the shutters but imperfectly exclude the rain. The ceilings and walls are mildewed and green with damp stains. Here and there, where the drip falls from the ceiling, the floors are rotting. On stormy nights, as the guard described, you can hear the doors clapping in the old house, as far away as Old Gryston bridge, and the howl and sobbing of the wind through its empty galleries.

About seventy years ago died the old Squire, Toby Marston, famous in that part of the world for his hounds, his hospitality, and his vices. He had done kind things, and he had fought duels: he had given away money and he had horse-whipped people. He carried with him some blessings and a good many curses, and left behind him an amount of debts and charges upon the estates which appalled his two sons, who had no taste for business or accounts, and had never suspected, till that wicked, open-handed, and swearing old gentleman died, how very nearly he had run the estates into insolvency.

They met at Gylingden Hall. They had the will before them, and lawyers to interpret, and information without stint, as to the encumbrances with which the deceased had saddled them. The will was so framed as to set the two brothers instantly at deadly feud.

These brothers differed in some points; but in one material characteristic they resembled one another, and also their departed father. They never went into a quarrel by halves, and once in, they did not stick at trifles.

The elder, Scroope Marston, the more dangerous man of the two, had never been a favourite of the old Squire. He had no taste for the sports of the field and the pleasures of a rustic life. He was no athlete, and he certainly was not handsome. All this the Squire resented. The young man, who had no respect for him, and outgrew his fear of his violence as he came to manhood, retorted. This aversion, therefore, in the ill-conditioned old man grew into positive hatred. He used to wish that d——d pipen-squeezing, humpbacked rascal Scroope, out of the way of better men—meaning his younger son Charles; and in his cups would talk in a way which even the old and young fellows who followed his hounds, and drank his port, and could stand a reasonable amount of brutality, did not like.

Scroope Marston was slightly deformed, and he had the lean sallow face, piercing black eyes, and black lank hair, which sometimes accompany deformity.

"I'm no feyther o' that hog-backed creature. I'm no sire of hism, d——n him! I'd as soon call that tongs son o' mine." The old man used to bawl, in allusion to his son's long, lank limbs: "Charlie's a man, but that's a jack-an-ape. He has no good-nature; there's nothing handy, nor manly, nor no one turn of a Marston in him."

And when he was pretty drunk, the old Squire used to swear he should never "sit at the head o' that board; nor frighten away folk from Gylingden Hall wi' his d——d hatchet-face—the black loon!"

"Handsome Charlie was the man for his money. He knew what a horse was, and could sit to his bottle; and the lasses were all clean *wad* about him. He was a Marston every inch of his six foot two."

Handsome Charlie and he, however, had also had a row or two. The old Squire was free with his horsewhip as with his tongue, and on occasion when neither weapon was quite practicable, had been known to give a fellow "a tap o' his knuckles." Handsome Charlie, however, thought there was a period at which personal chastisement should cease; and one night, when the port was flowing, there was some allusion to Marion Hayward, the miller's daughter, which for some reason the old gentleman did not like. Being "in liquor," and having clearer ideas about pugilism than self-government, he struck out, to the surprise of all present, at Handsome Charlie. The youth threw back his head scientifically, and nothing followed but the crash of a decanter on the floor. But the old Squire's blood was up, and he bounced from his chair. Up jumped Handsome Charlie, resolved to stand no nonsense. Drunken Squire Lilbourne, intending to mediate, fell flat on the floor, and cut his ear among the glasses. Handsome Charlie caught the thump which the old Squire discharged at him upon his open hand, and catching him by the cravat, swung him with his back to the wall. They said the old man never looked so purple, nor his eyes so goggle before; and then Handsome Charlie pinioned him tight to the wall by both arms.

"Well, I say—come, don't you talk no more nonsense o' that sort, and I won't lick you," croaked the old Squire. "You stopped that un clever, you did. Didn't he? Come, Charlie, man, gie' us your hand, I say, and sit down again, lad." And so the battle ended; and I believe it was the last time the Squire raised his hand to Handsome Charlie.

But those days were over. Old Toby Marston lay cold and quiet enough now, under the drip of the mighty ash-tree within the Saxon ruin where so many of the old Marston race returned to dust, and were forgotten. The weather-stained top-boots and leather-breeches, the three cocked hat to which old gentlemen of that day still clung, and the well-known red waistcoat that reached below his hips, and the fierce pug face of the old Squire, were now but a picture of memory. And the brothers between whom he had planted an irreconcilable quarrel, were now in their new mourning suits, with the gloss still on, debating furiously across the table in the great oak parlour, which had so often resounded to the banter and coarse songs, the oaths and laughter of the congenial neighbours whom the old Squire of Gylingden Hall loved to assemble there.

These young gentlemen, who had grown up in Gylingden Hall, were not accustomed to bridle their tongues, nor, if need be, to hesitate about a blow. Neither had been at the old man's funeral.

His death had been sudden. Having been helped to his bed in that hilarious and quarrelsome state which was induced by port and punch, he was found dead in the morning,—his head hanging over the side of the bed, and his face very black and swollen.

Now the Squire's will despoiled his eldest son of Gylingden, which had descended to the heir time out of mind. Scroope Marston was furious. His deep stern voice was heard inveighing against his dead father and living brother, and the heavy thumps on the table with which he enforced his stormy reclamations resounded through the large chamber. Then broke in Charles's rougher voice, and then came a quick alternation of short sentences, and then both voices together in growing loudness and anger, and at last, swelling the tumult, the expostulations of pacific and frightened lawyers, and at last a sudden break up of the conference. Scroope broke out of the room, his pale furious face showing whiter against his long black hair, his dark fierce eyes blazing, his hands clenched, and looking more ungainly and deformed than ever in the convulsions of his fury.

Very violent words must have passed between them; for Charlie, though he was the winning man, was almost as angry as Scroope. The elder brother was for holding possession of the house, and putting his rival to legal process to oust him. But his legal advisers were clearly against it. So, with a heart boiling over with gall, up he went to London, and found the legal firm who had managed his father's business fair and communicative enough. They looked into the settlements, and found that Gylingden was excepted. It was very odd, but so it was, specially excepted; so that the right of the old Squire to deal with it by his will could not be questioned.

Notwithstanding all this, Scroope, breathing vengeance and aggression, and quite willing to wreck himself provided he could run his brother down, assailed Handsome Charlie, and battered old Squire Toby's will in the Prerogative Court and also at common law, and the feud between the brothers was knit, and every month their exasperation was heightened.

Scroope was beaten, and defeat did not soften him. Charles might have forgiven hard words; but he had been himself worsted during the long campaign in some of those skirmishes, special motions, and so forth, that constitute the episodes of a legal epic like that in which the Marston brothers figured as opposing combatants; and the blight of law-costs had touched him, too, with the usual effect upon the temper of a man of embarrassed means.

Years flew, and brought no healing on their wings. On the contrary, the deep corrosion of this hatred bit deeper by time. Neither brother married. But an accident of a different kind befell the younger, Charles Marston, which abridged his enjoyments very materially.

This was a bad fall from his hunter. There were severe fractures, and there was concussion of the brain. For some time it was thought that he could not recover. He disappointed these evil auguries, however. He did recover, but changed in two essential particulars. He had received an injury in his hip, which doomed him never more to sit in saddle. And the rollicking animal spirits which hitherto had never failed him, had now taken flight for ever.

He had been for five days in a state of coma—absolute insensibility—and when he recovered consciousness he was haunted by an indescribable anxiety.

Tom Cooper, who had been butler in the palmy days of Gylingden Hall, under old Squire Toby, still maintained his post with old-fashioned fidelity, in these days of faded splendour and frugal housekeeping. Twenty years had passed since the death of his old master. He had grown lean, and stooped, and his face, dark with the peculiar brown of age, furrowed and gnarled, and his temper, except with his master, had waxed surly.

His master had visited Bath and Buxton, and came back, as he went, lame, and halting gloomily about with the aid of a stick. When the hunter was sold, the last tradition of the old life at Gylingden disappeared. The young Squire, as he was still called, excluded by his mischance from the hunting-field, dropped into a solitary way of life, and halted slowly and solitarily about the old place, seldom raising his eyes, and with an appearance of indescribable gloom.

Old Cooper could talk freely on occasion with his master; and one day he said, as he handed him his hat and stick in the hall:

"You should rouse yourself up a bit, Master Charles!"

"It's past rousing with me, old Cooper."

"It's just this, I'm thinking: there's something on your mind, and you won't tell no one. There's no good keeping it on your stomach. You'll be a deal lighter if you tell it. Come, now, what is it, Master Charlie?"

The Squire looked with his round grey eyes straight into Cooper's eyes. He felt that there was a sort of spell broken. It was like the old rule of the ghost who can't speak till it is spoken to. He looked earnestly into old Cooper's face for some seconds, and sighed deeply.

"It ain't the first good guess you've made in your day, old Cooper, and I'm glad you've spoke. It's bin on my mind, sure enough, ever since I had that fall. Come in here after me, and shut the door."

The Squire pushed open the door of the oak parlour, and looked round on the pictures abstractedly. He had not been there for some time, and, seating himself on the table, he looked again for a while in Cooper's face before he spoke.

"It's not a great deal, Cooper, but it troubles me, and I would not tell it to the parson nor the doctor; for, God knows, what they'd say, though there's nothing to signify in it. But you were always true to the family, and I don't mind if I tell you."

"'Tis as safe with Cooper, Master Charles, as if 'twas locked in a chest, and sunk in a well."

"It's only this" said Charles Marston, looking down on the end of his stick, with which he was tracing lines and circles, "all the time I was lying like dead, as you thought, after that fall, I was with the old master." He raised his eyes to Cooper's again as he spoke, and with an awful oath he repeated—"I was with him, Cooper!"

"He was a good man, sir, in his way," repeated old Cooper, returning his gaze with awe. "He was a good master to me, and a good father to you, and I hope he's happy. May God rest him!"

"Well," said Squire Charles, "it's only this: the whole of that time I was with him, or he was with me—I don't know which. The upshot is, we were together, and I thought I'd never get out of his hands again, and all the time he was bullying me about some one thing; and if it was to save my life, Tom Cooper, by —— from the time I waked I never could call to mind what it was; and I think I'd give that hand to know; and if you can think of anything it might be—for God's sake! don't be afraid, Tom Cooper, but speak it out, for he threatened me hard, and it was surely him."

Here ensued a silence.

"And what did you think it might be yourself, Master Charles?' said Cooper.

"I han't thought of aught that's likely. I'll never hit on't—*never.* I thought it might happen he knew something about that d—— hump-backed villain, Scroope, that swore before Lawyer Gingham I made away with a paper of settlements—me and father; and, as I hope to be saved, Tom Cooper, there never was a bigger lie! I'd a had the law of him for them identical words, and cast him for more than he's worth; only Lawyer Gingham never goes into nothing for me since money grew scarce in Gylingden; and I can't change my lawyer, I owe him such a hatful of money. But he did, he swore he'd hang me yet for it. He said it in them identical words—he'd never rest till he *hanged* me for it, and I think it was, like enough, something about *that,* the old master was troubled; but it's enough to drive a man mad. I *can't* bring it to mind—I can't remember a word he said, only he threatened awful, and looked—Lord a mercy on us!—frightful bad."

"There's no need he should. May the Lord a-mercy on him!" said the old butler.

"No, of course; and you're not to tell a soul, Cooper—not a living soul, mind, that I said he looked bad, nor nothing about it."

"God forbid!" said old Cooper, shaking his head. "But I was thinking, sir, it might ha' been about the slight that's bin so long put on him by having no stone over him, and never a scratch o' a chisel to say who he is."

"Ay! Well, I didn't think o' that. Put on your hat, old Cooper, and come down wi' me; for I'll look after that, at any rate."

There is a bye-path leading by a turnstile to the park, and thence to the picturesque old burying-place, which lies in a nook by the roadside, embowered in ancient trees. It was a fine autumnal sunset, and melancholy lights and long shadows spread their peculiar effects over the landscape as "Handsome Charlie" and the old butler made their way slowly toward the place where Handsome Charlie was himself to lie at last.

"Which of the dogs made that howling all last night?" asked the Squire, when they had got on a little way.

"'Twas a strange dog, Master Charles, in front of the house; ours was all in the yard—a white dog wi' a black head, he looked to be, and he was smelling round them mounting-steps the old master, God be wi' him! set up, the time his knee was bad. When the tyke got up a'top of them, howlin' up at the windows, I'd a liked to shy something at him."

"Hullo! Is that like him?" said the Squire, stopping short, and pointing with his stick at a dirty-white dog, with a large black head, which was scampering round them in a wide circle, half crouching with that air of uncertainty and deprecation which dogs so well know how to assume.

He whistled the dog up. He was a large, half-starved bull-dog.

"That fellow has made a long journey—thin as a whipping-post, and stained all over, and his claws worn to the stumps," said the Squire, musingly. "He isn't a bad dog, Cooper. My poor father liked a good bull-dog, and knew a cur from a good 'un."

The dog was looking up into the Squire's face with the peculiar grim visage of his kind, and the Squire was thinking irreverently how strong a likeness it presented to the character of his father's fierce pug features when he was clutching his horsewhip and swearing at a keeper.

"If I did right I'd shoot him. He'll worry the cattle, and kill our dogs," said the Squire. "Hey, Cooper? I'll tell the keeper to look after him. That fellow could pull down a sheep, and he shan't live on my mutton."

But the dog was not to be shaken off. He looked wistfully after the Squire, and after they had got a little way on, he followed timidly.

It was vain trying to drive him off. The dog ran round them in wide circles, like the infernal dog in "Faust;" only he left no track of thin flame behind him. These manœuvres were executed with a sort of beseeching air, which flattered and touched the object of this odd preference. So he called him up again, patted him, and then and there in a manner adopted him.

The dog now followed their steps dutifully, as if he had belonged to Handsome Charlie all his days. Cooper unlocked the little iron door, and the dog walked in close behind their heels, and followed them as they visited the roofless chapel.

The Marstons were lying under the floor of this little building in rows. There is not a vault. Each has his distinct grave enclosed in a lining of masonry. Each is surmounted by a stone kist, on the upper flag of which is inscribed his epitaph, except that of poor old Squire Toby. Over him was nothing but the grass and the line of masonry which indicates the site of the kist, whenever his family should afford him one like the rest.

"Well, it does look shabby. It's the elder brother's business; but if he won't, I'll see to it myself, and I'll take care, old boy, to cut sharp and deep in it, that the elder son having refused to lend a hand the stone was put there by the younger."

They strolled round this little burial-ground. The sun was now below the horizon, and the red metallic glow from the clouds, still illuminated by the departed sun, mingled luridly with the twilight. When Charlie peeped again into the little chapel, he saw the ugly dog stretched upon Squire Toby's grave, looking at least twice his natural length, and performing such antics as made the young Squire stare. If you have ever seen a cat stretched on the floor, with a bunch of Valerian, straining, writhing, rubbing its jaws in long-drawn caresses, and in the absorption of a sensual ecstacy, you have seen a phenomenon resembling that which Handsome Charlie witnessed on looking in.

The head of the brute looked so huge, its body so long and thin, and its joints so ungainly and dislocated, that the Squire, with old Cooper beside him, looked on with a feeling of disgust and astonishment, which, in a moment or two more, brought the Squire's stick down upon him with a couple of heavy thumps. The beast awakened from his ecstacy, sprang to the head of the grave, and there on a sudden, thick and bandy as before, confronted the Squire, who stood at its foot, with a terrible grin, and eyes that glared with the peculiar green of canine fury.

The next moment the dog was crouching abjectly at the Squire's feet.

"Well, he's a rum 'un!" said old Cooper, looking hard at him.

"I like him," said the Squire.

"I don't," said Cooper.

"But he shan't come in here again," said the Squire

"I shouldn't wonder if he was a witch," said old Cooper, who remembered more tales of witchcraft than are now current in that part of the world.

"He's a good dog," said the Squire, dreamily. "I remember the time I'd a given a handful for him—but I'll never be good for nothing again. Come along."

And he stooped down and patted him. So up jumped the dog and looked up in his face, as if watching for some sign, ever so slight, which he might obey.

Cooper did not like a bone in that dog's skin. He could not imagine what his master saw to admire in him. He kept him all night in the gun-room, and the dog accompanied him in his halting rambles about the place. The fonder his master grew of him, the less did Cooper and the other servants like him.

"He hasn't a point of a good dog about him," Cooper would growl. "I think Master Charlie be blind. And old Captain (an old red parrot who sat chained to a perch in the oak parlour, and conversed with himself, and nibbled at his claws and bit his perch all day),—old Captain, the only living thing, except one or two of us, and the Squire himself, that remembers the old master, the minute he saw the dog, screeched as if he was struck, shakin' his feathers out quite wild, and drops down, poor old soul, a-hangin' by his foot, in a fit."

But there is no accounting for fancies, and the Squire was one of those dogged persons who persist more obstinately in their whims the more they are opposed. But Charles Marston's health suffered by his lameness. The transition from habitual and violent exercise to such a life as his privation now consigned him to, was never made without a risk to health; and a host of dyspeptic annoyances, the existence of which he had never dreamed of before, now beset him in sad earnest. Among these was the now not unfrequent troubling of his sleep with dreams and nightmares. In these his canine favourite invariably had a part and was generally a central, and sometimes a solitary figure. In these visions the dog seemed to stretch himself up the side of the Squire's bed, and in dilated proportions to sit at his feet, with a horrible likeness to the pug features of old Squire Toby, with his tricks of wagging his head and throwing up his chin; and then he would talk to him about Scroope, and tell him "all wasn't straight," and that he "must make it up wi' Scroope," that he, the old Squire, had "served him an ill turn," that "time was nigh up," and that "fair was fair," and he was "troubled where he was, about Scroope."

Then in his dream this semi-human brute would approach his face to his, crawling and crouching up his body, heavy as lead, till the face of the beast was laid on his, with the same odious caresses and stretchings and writhings which he had seen over the old Squire's grave. Then Charlie would wake up with a gasp and a howl, and start upright in the bed, bathed in a cold moisture, and fancy he saw something white sliding off the foot of the bed. Sometimes he thought it might be the curtain with white lining that slipped down, or the coverlet disturbed by his uneasy turnings; but he always fancied, at such moments, that he saw something white sliding hastily off the bed; and always when he had been visited by such dreams the dog next morning was more than usually caressing and servile, as if to obliterate, by a more than ordinary welcome, the sentiment of disgust which the horror of the night had left behind it.

The doctor half-satisfied the Squire that there was nothing in these dreams, which, in one shape or another, invariably attended forms of indigestion such as he was suffering from.

For a while, as if to corroborate this theory, the dog ceased altogether to figure in them. But at last there came a vision in which, more unpleasantly than before, he did resume his old place.

In his nightmare the room seemed all but dark; he heard what he knew to be the dog walking from the door round his bed slowly, to the side from which he always had come upon it. A portion of the room was uncarpeted, and he said he distinctly heard the peculiar tread of a dog, in which the faint clatter of the claws is audible. It was a light stealthy step, but at every tread the whole room shook heavily; he felt something place itself at the foot of his bed, and saw a pair of green eyes staring at him in the dark, from which he could not remove his own. Then he heard, as he thought, the old Squire Toby say—"The eleventh hour be passed, Charlie, and ye've done nothing—you and I 'a done Scroope a wrong!" and then came a good deal more, and then—"The time's nigh up, it's going to strike." And with a long low growl, the thing began to creep up upon his feet; the growl continued, and he saw the reflection of the up-turned green eyes upon the bed-clothes, as it began slowly to stretch itself up his body toward his face. With a loud scream, he waked. The light, which of late the Squire was accustomed to have in his bed-room, had accidentally gone out. He was afraid to get up, or even to look about the room for some time; so sure did he feel of seeing the green eyes in the dark fixed on him from some corner. He had hardly recovered from the first agony which night-mare leaves behind it, and was beginning to collect his thoughts, when he heard the clock strike twelve. And he bethought him of the words "the eleventh hour be passed—time's nigh up—it's going to strike!" and he almost feared that he would hear the voice re-opening the subject.

Next morning the Squire came down looking ill.

"Do you know a room, old Cooper," said he, "they used to call King Herod's Chamber?"

"Ay, sir; the story of King Herod was on the walls o't when I was a boy."

"There's a closet off it—is there?"

"I can't be sure o' that; but 'tisn't worth your looking at, now; the hangings was rotten, and took off the walls, before you was born;

and there's nou't there but some old broken things and lumber. I seed them put there myself by poor Twinks; he was blind of an eye, and footman afterwards. You'll remember Twinks? He died here, about the time o' the great snow. There was a deal o' work to bury him, poor fellow!"

"Get the key, old Cooper; I'll look at the room," said the Squire.

"And what the devil can you want to look at it for?" said Cooper, with the old-world privilege of a rustic butler.

"And what the devil's that to you? But I don't mind if I tell you. I don't want that dog in the gun-room, and I'll put him somewhere else; and I don't care if I put him there."

"A bull-dog in a bed-room! Oons, sir! the folks 'ill say you're clean mad!"

"Well, let them; get you the key, and let us look at the room."

"You'd shoot him if you did right, Master Charlie. You never heard what a noise he kept up all last night in the gun-room, walking to and and fro growling like a tiger in a show; and, say what you like, the dog's not worth his feed; he hasn't a point of a dog; he's a bad dog."

"I know a dog better than you—and he's a good dog!" said the Squire, testily.

"If you was a judge of a dog you'd hang that un," said Cooper.

"I'm not a-going to hang him, so there's an end. Go you, and get the key; and don't be talking, mind, when you go down. I may change my mind."

Now this freak of visiting King Herod's room had, in truth, a totally different object from that pretended by the Squire. The voice in his nightmare had uttered a particular direction, which haunted him, and would give him no peace until he had tested it. So far from liking that dog to-day, he was beginning to regard it with a horrible suspicion; and if old Cooper had not stirred his obstinate temper by seeming to dictate, I dare say he would have got rid of that inmate effectually before evening.

Up to the third storey, long disused, he and old Cooper mounted. At the end of a dusty gallery, the room lay. The old tapestry, from which the spacious chamber had taken its name, had long given place to modern paper, and this was mildewed, and in some places hanging from the walls. A thick mantle of dust lay over the floor. Some broken chairs and boards, thick with dust, lay, along with other lumber, piled together at one end of the room.

They entered the closet, which was quite empty. The Squire looked round, and you could hardly have said whether he was relieved or disappointed.

"No furniture here," said the Squire, and looked through the dusty window. "Did you say anything to me lately—I don't mean this morning—about this room, or the closet—or anything—I forget—"

"Lor' bless you! Not I. I han't been thinkin' o' this room this forty year."

"Is there any sort of old furniture called a *buffet*—do you remember?" asked the Squire.

"A buffet? why, yes—to be sure—there was a buffet, sure enough, in this closet, now you bring it to my mind," said Cooper. "But it's papered over."

"And what is it?"

"A little cupboard in the wall," answered the old man.

"Ho—I see—and there's such a thing here, is there, under the paper? Show me whereabouts it was."

"Well—I think it was somewhere about here," answered he, rapping his knuckles along the wall opposite the window. "Ay, there it is," he added, as the hollow sound of a wooden door was returned to his knock.

The Squire pulled the loose paper from the wall, and disclosed the doors of a small press, about two feet square, fixed in the wall.

"The very thing for my buckles and pistols, and the rest of my gimcracks," said the Squire. "Come away, we'll leave the dog where he is. Have you the key of that little press?"

No, he had not. The old master had emptied and locked it up, and desired that it should be papered over, and that was the history of it.

Down came the Squire, and took a strong turn-screw from his gun-case; and quietly he re-ascended to King Herod's room, and, with little trouble, forced the door of the small press in the closet wall. There were in it some letters and cancelled leases, and also a parchment deed which he took to the window and read with much agitation. It was a supplemental deed executed about a fortnight after the others, and previously to his marriage, placing Gylingden under strict settlement to the elder son, in what is called "tail male." Handsome Charlie, in his fraternal litigation, had acquired a smattering of technical knowledge, and he perfectly well knew that the effect of this would be not only to transfer the house and lands to his brother Scroope, but to leave him at the mercy of that exasperated brother, who might recover from him personally every guinea he had ever received by way of rent, from the date of his father's death.

It was a dismal, clouded day, with something threatening in its aspect, and the darkness, where he stood, was made deeper by the top of one of the huge old trees overhanging the window.

In a state of awful confusion he attempted to think over his position. He placed the deed in his pocket, and nearly made up his mind to destroy it. A short time ago he would not have hesitated for a moment under such circumstances; but now his health and his nerves were shattered, and he was under a supernatural alarm which the strange discovery of this deed had powerfully confirmed.

In this state of profound agitation he heard a sniffing at the closet-door, and then an impatient scratch and a long low growl. He screwed his courage up, and, not knowing what to expect, threw the door open and saw the dog, not in his dream-shape, but wriggling with joy, and crouching and fawning with eager submission; and then wandering about the closet, the brute growled awfully into the corners of it, and seemed in an unappeasable agitation.

Then the dog returned and fawned and crouched again at his feet.

After the first moment was over, the sensations of abhorrence and fear began to subside, and he almost reproached himself for requiting the affection of this poor friendless brute with the antipathy which he had really done nothing to earn.

The dog pattered after him down the stairs. Oddly enough, the sight of this animal, after the first revulsion, reassured him; it was, in his eyes, so attached, so good-natured, and palpably so mere a dog.

By the hour of evening the Squire had resolved on a middle course; he would not inform his brother of his discovery, nor yet would he destroy the deed. He would never marry. He was past that time. He would leave a letter, explaining the discovery of the deed, addressed to the only surviving trustee—who had probably forgotten everything about it—and having seen out his own tenure, he would provide that all should be set right after his death. Was not that fair? at all events it quite satisfied what he called his conscience, and he thought it a devilish good compromise for his brother; and he went out, towards sunset, to take his usual walk.

Returning in the darkening twilight, the dog, as usual attending him, began to grow frisky and wild, at first scampering round him in great circles, as before, nearly at the top of his speed, his great head between his paws as he raced. Gradually more excited grew the pace and narrower his circuit, louder and fiercer his continuous growl, and the Squire stopped and grasped his stick hard, for the lurid eyes and the grin of the brute threatened an attack. Turning round and round as the excited brute encircled him, and striking vainly at him with his stick, he grew at last so tired that he almost despaired of keeping him longer at bay; when on a sudden the dog stopped short and crawled up to his feet wriggling and crouching submissively.

Nothing could be more apologetic and abject; and when the Squire dealt him two heavy thumps with his stick, the dog whimpered only, and writhed and licked his feet. The Squire sat down on a prostrate tree; and his dumb companion, recovering his wonted spirits immediately, began to sniff and nuzzle among the roots. The Squire felt in his breast-pocket for the deed—it was safe; and again he pondered, in this loneliest of spots, on the question whether he should preserve it for restoration after his death to his brother, or destroy it forthwith. He began rather to lean toward the latter solution, when the long low growl of the dog not far off startled him.

He was sitting in a melancholy grove of old trees, that slants gently westward. Exactly the same odd effect of light I have before described; a faint red glow reflected downward from the upper sky, after the sun had set, now gave to the growing darkness a lurid uncertainty. This grove, which lies in a gentle hollow, owing to its circumscribed horizon on all but one side, has a peculiar character of loneliness.

He got up and peeped over a sort of barrier, accidently formed of the trunks of felled trees laid one over the other, and saw the dog straining up the other side of it, and hideously stretched out, his ugly head looking in consequence twice the natural size. His dream was coming over him again. And now between the trunks the brute's ungainly head was thrust, and the long neck came straining through, and the body, twining after it like a huge white lizard; and as it came striving and twisting through, it growled and glared as if it would devour him.

As swiftly as his lameness would allow, the Squire hurried from this solitary spot towards the house. What thoughts exactly passed through his mind as he did so, I am sure he could not have told. But when the dog came up with him it seemed appeased, and even in high good-humour, and no longer resembled the brute that haunted his dreams.

That night, near ten o'clock, the Squire, a good deal agitated, sent for the keeper, and told him that he believed the dog was mad, and that he must shoot him. He might shoot the dog in the gun-room, where he was—a grain of shot or two in the wainscot did not matter, and the dog must not have a chance of getting out.

The Squire gave the gamekeeper his double-barrelled gun, loaded with heavy shot. He did not go with him beyond the hall. He placed his hand on the keeper's arm; the keeper said his hand trembled, and that he looked "as white as curds."

"Listen a bit!" said the Squire, under his breath.

They heard the dog in a state of high excitement in the room—growling ominously, jumping on the window-stool and down again, and running round the room.

"You'll need to be sharp, mind—don't give him a chance—slip in edgeways, d'ye see? and give him both barrels!"

"Not the first mad dog I've knocked over, sir," said the man, looking very serious as he cocked the gun.

As the keeper opened the door, the dog had sprung into the empty grate. He said he "never seed sich a stark, staring devil. The beast made a twist round, as if, he thought, to jump up the chimney—

"but that wasn't to be done at no price,"—and he made a yell—not like a dog—like a man caught in a mill-crank, and before he could spring at the keeper, he fired one barrel into him. The dog leaped towards him, and rolled over, receiving the second barrel in his head, as he lay snorting at the keeper's feet!

"I never seed the like; I never heard a screech like that!" said the keeper, recoiling. "It makes a fellow feel queer."

"Quite dead?" asked the Squire.

"Not a stir in him, sir," said the man, pulling him along the floor by the neck.

"Throw him outside the hall-door now," said the Squire; "and mind you pitch him outside the gate to-night—old Cooper says he's a witch," and the pale Squire smiled, "so he shan't lie in Gylingden."

Never was man more relieved than the Squire, and he slept better for a week after this than he had done for many weeks before.

It behoves us all to act promptly on our good resolutions. There is a determined gravitation towards evil, which, if left to itself, will bear down first intentions. If at one moment of superstitious fear, the Squire had made up his mind to a great sacrifice, and resolved in the matter of that deed so strangely recovered, to act honestly by his brother, that resolution very soon gave place to the compromise with fraud, which so conveniently postponed the restitution to the period when further enjoyment on his part was impossible. Then came more tidings of Scroope's violent and minatory language, with always the same burthen—that he would leave no stone unturned to show that there had existed a deed which Charles had either secreted or destroyed, and that he would never rest till he had hanged him.

This of course was wild talk. At first it had only enraged him; but with his recent guilty knowledge and suppression, had come fear. His danger was the existence of the deed, and little by little he brought himself to a resolution to destroy it. There were many falterings and recoils before he could bring himself to commit this crime. At length, however, he did it, and got rid of the custody of that which at any time might become the instrument of his disgrace and ruin. There was relief in this, but also the new and terrible sense of actual guilt.

He had got pretty well rid of his supernatural qualms. It was a different kind of trouble that agitated him now.

But this night, he imagined, he was awakened by a violent shaking of his bed. He could see, in the very imperfect light, two figures at the foot of it, holding each a bed-post. One of these he half fancied was his brother, Scroope, but the other was the old Squire—of that he was sure—and he fancied that they had shaken him up from his sleep. Squire Toby was talking as Charlie wakened, and he heard him say:

"Put out of our own house by you! It won't hold for long. We'll come in together, friendly, and stay. Forwarned, wi' yer eyes open, ye did it; and now Scroope 'll hang you! We'll hang you together! Look at me, you devil's limb."

And the old Squire tremblingly stretched his face, torn with shot, and bloody, and growing every moment more and more into the likeness of the dog, and began to stretch himself out and climb the bed over the foot-board; and he saw the figure at the other side, little more than a black shadow, begin also to scale the bed; and there was instantly a dreadful confusion and uproar in the room, and such a gabbling and laughing; he could not catch the words; but, with a scream, he woke, and found himself standing on the floor. The phantoms and the clamour were gone, but a crush and ringing of fragments was in his ears. The great china bowl, from which for generations the Marstons of Gylingden had been baptized, had fallen from the mantelpiece, and was smashed on the hearth-stone.

"I've bin dreamin' all night about Mr. Scroope, and I wouldn't wonder, old Cooper, if he was dead," said the Squire, when he came down in the morning.

"God forbid! I was adreamed about him, too, sir: I dreamed he was dammin' and sinkin' about a hole was burnt in his coat, and the old master, God be wi' him! said—quite plain—I'd 'a swore 'twas himself—'Cooper, get up, ye d——d land-loupin' thief, and lend a hand to hang him—for he's a daft cur, and no dog o' mine.' 'Twas the dog shot over night, I do suppose, as was runnin' in my old head. I thought old master gied me a punch wi' his knuckles, and says I, wakenin' up, 'At yer service, sir;' and for a while I couldn't get it out o' my head, master was in the room still."

Letters from town soon convinced the Squire that his brother Scroope, so far from being dead was particularly active; and Charlie's attorney wrote to say, in serious alarm, that he had heard, accidentally, that he intended setting up a case, of a supplementary deed of settlement, of which he had secondary evidence, which would give him Gylingden. And at this menace Handsome Charlie snapped his fingers, and wrote courageously to his attorney; abiding what might follow with, however, a secret foreboding.

Scroope threatened loudly now, and swore after his bitter fashion, and reiterated his old promise of hanging that cheat at last. In the midst of these menaces and preparations, however, a sudden peace proclaimed itself: Scroope died, without time even to make provision for a posthumous attack upon his brother. It was one of those cases of disease of the heart in which death is as sudden as by a bullet.

Charlie's exultation was undisguised. It was shocking. Not, of course, altogether malignant. For there was the expansion consequent on the removal of a secret fear. There was also the comic piece of luck, that only the day before Scroope had destroyed his old will, which left to a stranger every farthing he possessed, intending in a day or two to execute another to the same person, charged with the express condition of prosecuting the suit against Charlie.

The result was, that all his possessions went unconditionally to his brother Charles as his heir. Here were grounds for abundance of savage elation. But there was also the deep-seated hatred of half a life of mutual and persistent aggression and revilings; and Handsome Charlie was capable of nursing a grudge, and enjoying a revenge with his whole heart.

He would gladly have prevented his brother's being buried in the old Gylingden chapel, where he wished to lie; but his lawyers doubted his power, and he was not quite proof against the scandal which would attend his turning back the funeral, which would, he knew, be attended by some of the county gentry and others, with an hereditary regard for the Marstons.

But he warned his servants that not one of them were to attend it; promising, with oaths and curses not to be disregarded, that any one of them who did so, should find his door shut in his face on his return.

I don't think, with the exception of old Cooper, that the servants cared for this prohibition, except as it baulked a curiosity always strong in the solitude of the country. Cooper was very much vexed that the eldest son of the old Squire should be buried in the old family chapel, and no sign of decent respect from Gylingden Hall. He asked his master, whether he would not, at least, have some wine and refreshments in the oak parlour, in case any of the country gentlemen who paid this respect to the old family should come up to the house? But the Squire only swore at him, told him to mind his own business, and ordered him to say, if such a thing happened, that he was out, and no preparations made, and, in fact, to send them away as they came. Cooper expostulated stoutly, and the Squire grew angrier; and after a tempestuous scene, took his hat and stick and walked out, just as the funeral descending the valley from the direction of the "Old Angel Inn" came in sight.

Old Cooper prowled about disconsolately, and counted the carriages as well as he could from the gate. When the funeral was over, and they began to drive away, he returned to the hall, the door of which lay open, and as usual deserted. Before he reached it quite a mourning coach drove up, and two gentlemen in black cloaks, and with crapes to their hats, got out, and without looking to the right or the left, went up the steps into the house. Cooper followed them slowly. The carriage had, he supposed, gone round to the yard, for, when he reached the door, it was no longer there.

So he followed the two mourners into the house. In the hall he found a fellow-servant, who said he had seen two gentlemen, in black cloaks, pass through the hall, and go up the stairs without removing their hats, or asking leave of any one. This was very odd, old Cooper thought, and a great liberty; so upstairs he went to make them out.

But he could not find them then, nor ever. And from that hour the house was troubled.

In a little time there was not one of the servants who had not something to tell. Steps and voices followed them sometimes in the passages, and tittering whispers, always minatory, scared them at corners of the galleries, or from dark recesses; so that they would return panic-stricken to be rebuked by thin Mrs. Beckett, who looked on such stories as worse than idle. But Mrs. Beckett herself, a short time after, took a very different view of the matter.

She had herself begun to hear these voices, and with this formidable aggravation, that they came always when she was at her prayers, which she had been punctual in saying all her life, and utterly interrupted them. She was scared at such moments by dropping words and sentences, which grew, as she persisted, into threats and blasphemies.

These voices were not always in the room. They called, as she fancied, through the walls, very thick in that old house, from the neighbouring apartments, sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other; sometimes they seemed to hollo from distant lobbies, and came muffled, but threateningly, through the long panelled passages. As they approached they grew furious, as if several voices were speaking together. Whenever, as I said, this worthy woman applied herself to her devotions, these horrible sentences came hurrying toward the door, and, in panic, she would start from her knees, and all then would subside except the thumping of her heart against her stays, and the dreadful tremours of her nerves.

What these voices said, Mrs. Beckett never could quite remember one minute after they had ceased speaking; one sentence chased another away; gibe and menace and impious denunciation, each hideously articulate, were lost as soon as heard. And this added to the effect of these terrifying mockeries and invectives, that she could not, by any effort, retain their exact import, although their horrible character remained vividly present to her mind.

For a long time the Squire seemed to be the only person in the house absolutely unconscious of these annoyances. Mrs. Beckett had twice made up her mind within the week to leave. A prudent woman, however, who has been comfortable for more than twenty years in a place, thinks oftener than twice before she leaves it. She and old Cooper were the only servants in the house who remembered the good old housekeeping in Squire Toby's day. The others were few, and such as could hardly be accounted regular servants. Meg Dobbs, who acted as housemaid, would not sleep in the house, but walked home, in trepidation, to her father's, at the gate-house, under the escort of her little brother, every night. Old Mrs. Beckett, who was high and mighty with the make-shift servants of fallen Gylingden, let herself down all at once, and made Mrs. Kymes and the kitchenmaid move their beds into her large and faded room, and there, very frankly, shared her nightly terrors with them.

Old Cooper was testy and captious about these stories. He was already uncomfortable enough by reason of the entrance of the two muffled figures into the house, about which there could be no mistake. His own eyes had seen them. He refused to credit the stories of the women, and affected to think that the two mourners might have left the house and driven away, on finding no one to receive them.

Old Cooper was summoned at night to the oak parlour, where the Squire was smoking.

"I say, Cooper," said the Squire, looking pale and angry, "what for ha' you been frightenin' they crazy women wi' your plaguy stories? d— me, if you see ghosts here it's no place for you, and it's time you should pack. I won't be left without servants. Here has been old Beckett, wi' the cook and the kitchenmaid, as white as pipe-clay, all in a row, to tell me I must have a parson to sleep among them, and preach down the devil! Upon my soul, you're a wise old body, filling their heads wi' maggots! and Meg goes down to the lodge every night, afeard to lie in the house—all your doing, wi' your old wives' stories,—ye withered old Tom o' Bedlam!"

"I'm not to blame, Master Charles. 'Tisn't along o' no stories o' mine, for I'm never done tellin' 'em it's all vanity and vapours. Mrs. Beckett 'ill tell you that, and there's been many a wry word betwixt us on the head o't. Whate'er I may *think*," said old Cooper, significantly, and looking askance, with the sternness of fear in the Squire's face.

The Squire averted his eyes, and muttered angrily to himself, and turned away to knock the ashes out of his pipe on the hob, and then turning suddenly round upon Cooper again, he spoke, with a pale face, but not quite so angrily as before.

"I know you're no fool, old Cooper, when you like. Suppose there was such a thing as a ghost here, don't you see, it ain't to them snipe-headed women it 'id go to tell its story. What ails you, man, that ye should think aught about it, but just what *I* think? You had a good headpiece o' yer own once, Cooper, don't be you clappin' a goose-cap over it, as my poor father used to say; d— it, old boy, you mustn't let 'em be fools, settin' one another wild wi' their blether, and makin' the folk talk what they shouldn't, about Gylingden and the family. I don't think ye'd like that, old Cooper, I'm sure ye wouldn't. The women has gone out o' the kitchen, make up a bit o' fire, and get your pipe. I'll go to you, when I finish this one, and we'll smoke a bit together, and a glass o' brandy and water."

Down went the old butler, not altogether unused to such condescensions in that disorderly, and lonely household; and let not those who can choose their company, be too hard on the Squire who couldn't.

When he had got things tidy, as he said, he sat down in that big old kitchen, with his feet on the fender, the kitchen candle burning in a great brass candlestick, which stood on the deal table at his elbow, with the brandy bottle and tumblers beside it, and Cooper's pipe also in readiness. And these preparations completed, the old butler, who had remembered other generations and better times, fell into rumination, and so, gradually, into a deep sleep.

Old Cooper was half awakened by some one laughing low, near his head. He was dreaming of old times in the Hall, and fancied one of "the young gentlemen" going to play him a trick, and he mumbled something in his sleep, from which he was awakened by a stern deep voice, saying, "You wern't at the funeral; I might take your life, I'll take your ear." At the same moment, the side of his head received a violent push, and he started to his feet. The fire had gone down, and he was chilled. The candle was expiring in the socket, and threw on the white wall long shadows, that danced up and down from the ceiling to the ground, and their black outlines he fancied resembled the two men in cloaks, whom he remembered with a profound horror.

He took the candle, with all the haste he could, getting along the passage, on whose walls the same dance of black shadows was continued, very anxious to reach his room before the light should go out. He was startled half out of his wits by the sudden clang of his master's bell, close over his head, ringing furiously.

"Ha, ha! There it goes—yes, sure enough," said Cooper, reassuring himself with the sound of his own voice, as he hastened on, hearing more and more distant every moment the same furious ringing. "He's fell asleep, like me; that's it, and his lights is out, I lay you fifty——"

When he turned the handle of the door of the oak parlour, the Squire wildly called, "Who's *there?*" in the tone of a man who expects a robber.

"It's me, old Cooper, all right, Master Charlie, you didn't come to the kitchen after all, sir."

"I'm very bad, Cooper; I don't know how I've been. Did you meet anything?" asked the Squire.

"No," said Cooper.

They stared on one another.

"Come here—stay here! Don't you leave me! Look round the room, and say is all right; and gie us your hand, old Cooper, for I must hold it." The Squire's was damp and cold, and trembled very much. It was not very far from day-break now."

After a time he spoke again: "I 'a done many a thing I shouldn't. I'm not fit to go, and wi' God's blessin' I'll look to it—why shouldn't I? I'm as lame as old Billy—I'll never be able to do any good no more, and I'll give over drinking, and marry, as I ought to 'a done long ago—none o' yer fine ladies, but a good homely wench; there's Farmer Crump's youngest daughter, a good lass, and discreet. What for shouldn't I take her? She'd take care o' me, and wouldn't bring a head full o' romances here, and mantua-makers' trumpery, and I'll talk wi' the parson, and I'll do what's fair wi' everyone; and mind, I said I'm sorry for many a thing I 'a done."

A wild cold dawn had by this time broken. The Squire, Cooper said, looked "awful bad," as he got his hat and stick, and sallied out for a walk, instead of going to his bed, as Cooper besought him, looking so wild and distracted, that it was plain his object was simply to escape from the house. It was twelve o'clock when the Squire walked into the kitchen, where he was sure of finding some of the servants, looking as if ten years had passed over him since yesterday. He pulled a stool by the fire, without speaking a word, and sat down. Cooper had sent to Applebury for the doctor, who had just arrived, but the Squire would not go to him. "If he wants to see me, he may come here," he muttered as often as Cooper urged him. So the doctor did come, charily enough, and found the Squire very much worse than he had expected.

The Squire resisted the order to get to his bed. But the doctor insisted under a threat of death, at which his patient quailed.

"Well, I'll do what you say—only this—you must let old Cooper and Dick Keeper stay wi' me. I mustn't be left alone, and they must keep awake o' nights; and stay a while, do *you*. When I get round a bit, I'll go and live in a town. It's dull livin' here, now that I can't do nou't, as I used, and I'll live a better life, mind ye; ye heard me say that, and I don't care who laughs, and I'll talk wi' the parson. I like 'em to laugh, hang 'em, it's a sign I'm doin' right, at last."

The doctor sent a couple of nurses from the County Hospital, not choosing to trust his patient to the management he had selected, and he went down himself to Gylingden to meet them in the evening. Old Cooper was ordered to occupy the dressing-room, and sit up at night, which satisfied the Squire, who was in a strangely excited state, very low, and threatened, the doctor said, with fever.

The clergyman came, an old, gentle, "book-learned" man, and talked and prayed with him late that evening. After he had gone the Squire called the nurses to his bed-side, and said:

"There's a fellow sometimes comes: you'll never mind him. He looks in at the door and beckons,—a thin, hump-backed chap in mourning, wi' black gloves on; ye'll know him by his lean face, as brown as the wainscot: don't ye mind his smilin'. You don't go out to him, nor ask him in; he won't say nout; and if he grows anger'd and looks awry at ye, don't ye be afeared, for he can't hurt ye, and he'll grow tired waitin', and go away; and for God's sake mind ye don't ask him in, nor go out after him!"

The nurses put their heads together when this was over, and held afterwards a whispering conference with old Cooper. "Law bless ye!—no, there's no madman in the house," he protested; "not a soul but what ye saw,—its just a trifle o' the fever in his head—no more."

The Squire grew worse as the night wore on. He was heavy and delirious, talking of all sorts of things—of wine, and dogs, and lawyers; and then he began to talk, as it were, to his brother Scroope. As he did so, Mrs. Oliver, the nurse, who was sitting up alone with him, heard, as she thought, a hand softly laid on the door-handle outside, and a stealthy attempt to turn it. "Lord bless us! who's there?" she cried, and her heart jumped into her mouth, as she thought of the hump-backed man in black, who was to put in his head smiling and beckoning.—"Mr. Cooper! sir! are you there?" she cried. "Come here, Mr. Cooper, please—do, sir, quick!"

Old Cooper, called up from his doze by the fire, stumbled in from the dressing-room, and Mrs. Oliver seized him tightly as he emerged.

"The man with the hump has been atryin' the door, Mr. Cooper, as sure as I am here." The Squire was moaning and mumbling in his fever, understanding nothing, as she spoke.—"No, no! Mrs. Oliver, ma'am, it's impossible, for there's no sich man in the house: what is Master Charlie sayin'?"

"He's saying *Scroope* every minute, whatever he means by that, and—and—hisht!—listen!—there's the handle again," and, with a loud scream, she added—"Look at his head and neck in at the door!" and in her tremour she strained old Cooper in an agonizing embrace.

The candle was flaring, and there was a wavering shadow at the door that looked like the head of a man with a long neck, and a longish sharp nose, peeping in and drawing back.

"Don't be a d— fool, ma'am!" cried Cooper, very white, and shaking her with all his might. "It's only the candle, I tell you—nothing in life but that. Don't you see?" and he raised the light; "and I'm sure there was no one at the door, and I'll try, if you let me go."

The other nurse was asleep on a sofa, and Mrs. Oliver called her up in a panic, for company, as old Cooper opened the door. There was no one near it, but at the angle of the gallery was a shadow resembling that which he had seen in the room. He raised the candle a little, and it seemed to beckon with a long hand as the head drew back. "Shadow from the candle!" exclaimed Cooper, aloud, resolved not to yield to Mrs. Oliver's panic; and, candle in hand, he walked to the corner. There was nothing. He could not forbear peeping down the long gallery from this point, and as he moved the light, he saw precisely the same sort of shadow, a little further down, and as he advanced the same withdrawal, and beckon. "Gammon!" said he; "it is nout but the candle." And on he went, growing half angry and half frightened at the persistency with which this ugly shadow—a literal shadow he was sure it was—presented itself. As he drew near the point where it now appeared, it seemed to collect itself, and nearly dissolve in the central panel of an old carved cabinet which he was now approaching.

In the centre panel of this is a sort of boss carved into a wolf's head. The light fell oddly upon this, and the fugitive shadow seemed to be breaking up, and re-arranging itself as oddly. The eye-ball gleamed with a point of reflected light, which glittered also upon the grinning mouth, and he saw the long, sharp nose of Scroope Marston, and his fierce eye looking at him, he thought, with a steadfast meaning.

Old Cooper stood gazing upon this sight, unable to move, till he saw the face and the figure that belonged to it begin gradually to emerge from the wood. At the same time he heard voices approaching rapidly up a side gallery, and Cooper, with a loud "Lord a-mercy on us!" turned and ran back again, pursued by a sound that seemed to shake the old house like a mighty gust of wind.

Into his master's room burst old Cooper, half wild with fear, and clapped the door and turned the key in a twinkling, looking as if he had been pursued by murderers.

"Did you hear it?" whispered Cooper, now standing near the dressing-room door. They all listened, but not a sound from without disturbed the utter stillness of night. "God bless us! I doubt it's my old head that's gone crazy!" exclaimed Cooper.

He would tell them nothing but that he was himself "an old fool," to be frightened by their talk, and that "the rattle of a window, or the dropping o' a pin" was enough to scare him now; and so he helped himself through that night with brandy, and sat up talking by his master's fire.

The Squire recovered slowly from his brain fever, but not perfectly. A very little thing, the doctor said, would suffice to upset him. He was not yet sufficiently strong to remove for change of scene and air, which were necessary for his complete restoration.

Cooper slept in the dressing-room, and was now his only nightly attendant. The ways of the invalid were odd: he liked, half sitting up in his bed, to smoke his churchwarden o' nights, and made old Cooper smoke, for company, at the fire-side. As the Squire and his humble friend indulged in it, smoking is a taciturn pleasure, and it was not until the Master of Gylingden had finished his third pipe that he essayed conversation, and when he did, the subject was not such as Cooper would have chosen.

"I say, old Cooper, look in my face, and don't be afeared to speak out," said the Squire, looking at him with a steady, cunning smile; "you know all this time, as well as I do, who's in the house. You needn't deny—hey?—Scroope and my father?"

"Don't you be talking like that, Charlie," said old Cooper, rather sternly and frightened, after a long silence; still looking in his face, which did not change.

"What's the good o' shammin,' Cooper? Scroope's took the hearin' o' yer right ear—you know he did. He's looking angry. He's nigh took my life wi' this fever. But he's not done wi' me, yet, and he looks awful wicked. Ye saw him—ye know ye did."

Cooper was awfully frightened, and the odd smile on the Squire's lips frightened him still more. He dropped his pipe, and stood gazing in silence at his master, and feeling as if he were in a dream.

"If ye think so, ye should not be smiling like that," said Cooper, grimly.

"I'm tired, Cooper, and it's as well to smile as t'other thing; so I'll even smile while I can. You know what they mean to do wi' me. That's all I wanted to say. Now, lad, go on wi' yer pipe—I'm goin' asleep."

So the Squire turned over in his bed, and lay down serenely, with his head on the pillow. Old Cooper looked at him, and glanced at the door, and then half-filled his tumbler with brandy, and drank it off, and felt better, and got to his bed in the dressing-room.

In the dead of night he was suddenly awakened by the Squire, who was standing, in his dressing-gown and slippers, by his bed.

"I've brought you a bit o' a present. I got the rents o' Hazelden yesterday, and ye'll keep that for yourself—it's a fifty—and give t' other to Nelly Carwell, to-morrow; I'll sleep the sounder; and I saw Scroope since; he's not such a bad 'un after all, old fellow! He's got a crape over his face—for I told him I couldn't bear it; and I'd do many a thing for him now. I never could stand shilly-shally. Good-night, old Cooper!"

And the Squire laid his trembling hand kindly on the old man's shoulder, and returned to his own room. "I don't half like how he is. Doctor don't come half often enough. I don't like that queer smile o' his, and his hand was as cold as death. I hope in God his brain's not a-turnin'!"

With these reflections, he turned to the pleasanter subject of his present, and at last fell asleep.

In the morning, when he went into the Squire's room, the Squire had left his bed. "Never mind; he'll come back, like a bad shillin'," thought old Cooper, preparing the room as usual. But he did not return. Then began an uneasiness, succeeded by a panic, when it began to be plain that the Squire was not in the house. What had become of him? None of his clothes, but his dressing-gown and slippers, were missing. Had he left the house, in his present sickly state, in that garb? and, if so, could he be in his right senses; and was there a chance of his surviving a cold, damp night, so passed, in the open air?

Tom Edwards was up to the house, and told them, that, walking a mile or so that morning, at four o'clock—there being no moon—along with Farmer Nokes, who was driving his cart to market, in the dark, three men walked, in front of the horse, not twenty yards before them, all the way from near Gylingden Lodge to the burial-ground, the gate of which was opened for them from within, and the three men entered, and the gate was shut. Tom Edwards thought they were gone in to make preparation for a funeral of some member of the Marston family. But the occurrence seemed to Cooper, who knew there was no such thing, horribly ominous.

He now commenced a careful search, and at last bethought him of the lonely upper story, and King Herod's chamber. He saw nothing changed there, but the closet door was shut, and, dark as was the morning, something, like a large white knot sticking out over the door, caught his eye.

The door resisted his efforts to open it for a time; some great weight forced it down against the floor; at length, however, it did yield a little, and a heavy crash, shaking the whole floor, and sending an echo flying through all the silent corridors, with a sound like receding laughter, half stunned him.

When he pushed open the door, his master was lying dead upon the floor. His cravat was drawn halter-wise tight round his throat, and had done its work well. The body was cold, and had been long dead.

In due course the coroner held his inquest, and the jury pronounced, "that the deceased, Charles Marston, had died by his own hand, in a state of temporary insanity." But old Cooper had his own opinion about the Squire's death, though his lips were sealed, and he never spoke about it. He went and lived for the residue of his days in York, where there are still people who remember him, a taciturn and surly old man, who attended church regularly, and also drank a little, and was known to have saved some money.

EDMUND BURKE: A HISTORICAL STUDY.*

ABSORBING as the questions are that have arisen since the death of Lord Palmerston, and the opening of the new era, there are no doubt many thinkers of the higher order who will spare time to "study" anew, with the author of the work before us, the political philosophy of Edmund Burke. Among the tributes that have been paid to the genius and earnestness of our distinguished countryman, not the least remarkable is the devotion to the subject of his life, speeches, and principles shown by a critic so profound and well-read. That a student of this stamp should discover a close relationship between the experiences of Burke's day and the difficulties and wants of our own, is an invitation to carry ourselves back to the conflicts of almost a century ago which all can understand. Mr. Morley is not a biographer of Burke. That task had been already well performed. His design has been rather to take a survey of parties, men, events, and theories of administration, in a crisis not more serious than the present, as these gather about Burke as a central figure. The writer who sets such an object before him would need much elevation of judgment, entire independence of special predilections, a pure historical aim. The title of the book is in declared opposition to all hasty conclusions, all narrow observation, every attempt to square circumstances with doctrines either ancient or modern. Mr. Morley inspires us with confidence at the outset by his chapter of "Characteristics." He admits that Burke found politics debased, and gave to them a new life by appealing to nobler tests than the class among whom he found himself had an imagination of. He sympathizes with Mr. Buckle's enumeration of the bad measures which Burke assailed, and the good measures which he defended. "Not only did he attack the absurd laws against forestalling and regrating, but by advocating the freedom of trade he struck at the root of all similar prohibitions. He supported those just claims of the Catholics which, during his lifetime, were obstinately refused, but which were conceded many years after his death, as the only means of preserving the integrity of the empire. He supported the petition of the Dissenters, that they might be relieved from the restrictions to which, for the benefit of the Church of England, they were subjected. He opposed the cruel laws against insolvents, by which in the time of George IV. our statute-book was still defaced; and he vainly attempted to soften the penal code, the increasing severity of which was one of the worst features of that bad reign." He wished to abolish the old plan of enlisting soldiers for life—a barbarous and impolitic practice. He attacked the slave trade, which "being an ancient usage, the King wished to preserve, as part of the British Constitution." He refuted, but owing to the prejudices of the age was unable to subvert, the dangerous power exercised by the judges, who, in criminal prosecutions for libel, confined the jury to the mere question of publication, thus taking the real issue into their own hands. "And what many will think not the least of his merits, he was the first in that long line of financial reformers to whom we are deeply indebted. Notwithstanding the difficulties thrown in his way, he carried through Parliament a series of bills by which several useless places were entirely abolished, and, in the single office of Paymaster-General, a saving effected to the country of £25,000 a year." No doubt, from one point of view, Burke may be described rather as a rhetorician than a political philosopher, but a catalogue like this of ideas in practical statesmanship, some of them followed out to success, is sufficient to disprove the allegation that he was a rhetorician chiefly. On this head Mr. Morley seems to us particularly happy as well as just, when he says:—"Burke's speculations always had reference to a practical problem. They were not conceived by a student in his closet, but by a member of the legislature in the middle of the political arena. A narrow Utopianism—the besetting weakness of most other great writers on politics—was impossible with a man situated as Burke was situated. This inevitably straitened the range of his ideas; but it gave them an air of substance and solidity which served to attract the sympathy and admiration of men to whom bare general ideas were not less detestable than they were to Burke himself. It is a characteristic of the English mind—and it was stronger a hundred years ago than it is now—that we hardly know how to reconcile ourselves to accept more than one general principle at a time, and it must be exhibited in its practical application to a special case then and there before us."

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* By John Morley, B.A., Oxford. London: Macmillan & Co.

Mr. Morley allows quite as fully how greatly Burke's "wisdom" was shown in the "luminous utterances" which abound in his writings, and of which even more striking examples than he has supplied might have been given. These attest Burke's claim to be regarded as a thinker endowed with that rarest of gifts, the power to clothe thoughts in phrase so pointed, full, and clear, that his apophthegms became endowed with a life and endurance in political literature. If we quote the following as a striking specimen of this shrewdness, and beauty and force of expression, it must be with the reservation that some are too forward in their politics, and would plunge into the circumstances that probably may arise a score years hence, as if everything about us to-day were suitable to the ideas and principles which may then be inevitable and safe. "I have constantly observed," said Burke, "that the generality of people are fifty years at least behindhand in their politics. There are but very few who are capable of comparing and digesting what passes before their eyes at different times and occasions, so as to form the whole into a distinct system. But in books everything is settled for them, without the exertion of any considerable diligence or sagacity. For which reason men are wise with but little reflection, and good with little self-denial in the business of all times except their own. We are very uncorrupt and tolerably enlightened judges of the transactions of past ages. . . . I believe there was no profound admirer of Henry VIII. among the instruments of the last King James; nor in the Court of Henry VIII. was there, I daresay, to be found a single advocate for the favourites of Richard II." Wisely he said again that one sure symptom of an ill-conducted State is the propensity of the people who are really happy to resort to theories for the securing of fancied greater happiness. He felt a reluctance to "give his hand to destroy any established institution of Government upon a theory, however plausible it may be." A manly, moral, regulated liberty was his political worship. As he loved the Constitution, so did he hate demagogues. He was a valiant champion of Reform, but an enemy to innovation. "The philosophic partisan of order," says Mr. Morley, finely, "who entreats men to be sure they get the best out of the systems under which the time constrains them to live, before casting recklessly about for new things, commonly receives something less than justice from the anxious and ardent partisans of progress. And this has, perhaps, been Burke's lot. Men constitutionally, or by habit, unable to realize the pleasures conferred by a reverent love of political, social, and moral order, have dealt little sympathy to one who threw himself so consistently and vehemently as Burke did athwart the revolutionary or critical movement of his time."

The enlarged view taken by Mr. Morley of the "issues of the time" is marked by his including Wesley and Whitfield among the larger influences which gave a fresh impulse to the national life. When Burke was first moving the House of Commons those great preachers were, in the spiritual order, awaking the mind of England, "filling with lofty and divine visions the once blind souls of men and women who had laboured blankly, as brute beasts labour, down in coal-mines, in factories, in even furnaces and forges, in dank fields, on barren, remote moors, and who till then had known no glimpses of a wider and more joyful life than the life of a starved and ever-benumbed sense." In the industrial order; in the speculative and scientific order; in the political order—in all alike there was then a stirring of the dry bones; but none of them had a wider effect—none, possibly, had so wide an effect, over and among the people, as the Wesleyan Reformation. It caused, incidentally, a general development of democratic principles—religious dissent, into which the religious reformers were forced, led to advanced views in politics, and a bold questioning of the old system. Burke recognised these new forces, and was true to the Constitution in accordance with them, not in an obstinate resistance to them. He recognised in the Constitution a government for the whole people, by the whole people. It was a perfect machine to which all classes had only to be faithful, to secure happiness. "Our Constitution," said he once, "is like an island which uses and restrains its subject sea. In vain the waves roar. In that Constitution I know, and exultingly I feel, both that I am free, and that I am not free dangerously to myself or to others. Never will I cut it in pieces and put it into the kettle of any magician, in order to boil it with the puddle of their compounds into youth and vigour: on the contrary, I will drive away such pretenders; I will nurse its venerable age, and with lenient acts extend a parent's breath." It was necessary that there should be an orator thus to contend against innovators, when these were daring in their purposes; but of the improvement of institutions within the Constitution, Burke was quite as earnest a champion as of the sacredness of the Constitution itself.

As a sample of Mr. Morley's proper style, and the range of his own strong judgment, we shall quote a passage on the war of American Independence. "The attitude of the English majority in that war," says our author, "and the wretched disasters which ensued, constitute one of the most striking examples which history furnishes of the widespread mischief that may be inflicted by the predominance of an unsound metaphysical abstraction . . It may perhaps be a question with the student of history, whether the misdirected idea of public Right, or the misdirected idea of public Duty has been the root of greater calamities for mankind. To the latter we owe the chapter of religious persecution, which might appear the most heartrending section in the annals of the race, until we come to reflect on the misery which has been spread over the face of the earth in the vindication of their fancied or real rights by tyrannical sovereigns and frenzied peoples. The motive present to the earliest English supporters of Lord North's system was mainly a desire to save themselves from a part of their taxes which they hoped to extract from the colonists. But a mercenary impulse of this sort must be supported and justified by a passable principle. Without such a principle they would not be able to grapple to themselves the mass of the people. They fell back upon the doctrine that the English government was sovereign in the colonies as well as at home; and in the notion of sovereignty they found inherent the notion of an indefeasible right to impose and exact taxes. Having satisfied themselves of the existence of this sovereignty, and of the right, therefore, which they took to be its natural property, they saw no step between the establishment of their abstract right and the establishment of the propriety of enforcing it."

The whole chapter upon this point, on which Mr. Morley has expended much labour, is well worth the contemplation of the politician aiming to become a statesman. We say nothing of several of his illustrations of the principle, but the principle itself that no "given right (in a public sense), is possessed of qualities beyond those of a measurable fluctuating and conventional value," cannot be successfully disputed. In the application of it lies the difficulty. All men can see now that it was simply iniquitous to pretend to an absolute right over the American colonies, but a few persons only saw the wickedness of the obstinacy of that course at the time, and of the majority there were some who may have thought it would be impolitic to yield: it is hard for those mixed up in the strifes of parties to say how far what they regard as cool reasonings may be affected by the prejudices of the hour. The recent circumstances of America herself would seem to offer a powerful illustration. The abstract "right" of the North to compel the South to remain in the Union was plain; but few, with the experience before them of the entire failure of all plans yet proposed for a rational reconstruction, will deny that the Southern population would have been happier had the Northern population admitted that rights are modified by fluctuating influences. Every consideration for the welfare of the South imperiously demanded separation, and despite the activity of the American mind, and the theoretical independence of every man in that country, the population which split off were not allowed to determine their own happiness. We doubt whether Mr. Morley could make good the proposition that the Americans have ever been true to their first doctrine. What they successfully claimed at the date of the war of Independence, they did not concede when pretty much the same circumstances arose in their own case.

Necessarily, Mr. Morley touches but slightly upon Burke's services to Ireland. The ground to be covered was too large to permit of delay at that stage, and Burke was more of an Imperial than an Irish statesman. This chapter, however, is rendered remarkable by the author's estimate of the progress of Irish society, and his philosophical and most accurate contrast of the country with the Catholic nations of Europe, which have gone through a moral and social struggle which Ireland has yet to experience. Whilst feudalism and Catholicism have been decaying in Europe, and principles of toleration gaining power over them, in Ireland this transformation has to happen. "Instead of Catholicism decaying we see it rooted and fostered by its identification with hostility to the [supposed] political oppressors. Instead of a crumbling feudalism, we encounter all the worst attributes of an easy conquest, aggravated by the circumstance of its extreme untimeousness. Instead of the growth of toleration, we find at the very end of the tolerant eighteenth century, Catholic and Protestant engaged in a violent and sanguinary struggle. Instead of the slow replacement of superstition by reason, we see Ireland the chief home of the most irrational forms of Ultramontanism; we see religious considerations paramount in determining political attitudes. "Irish Liberals" (Mr. Morley adds) "are seen deliberately abandoning the only principles on which their country could be freed from its oppressive system." If the criticism strictly applies to the Burke era, we cannot doubt that the form of the language was intended to convey the author's present estimate of Ireland socially and politically, and it is, in any case, humiliating in the extreme that what is written of the last quarter of the eighteenth century should be true of the latter half of the nineteenth! Indeed, strictly applying Mr. Morley's tests, we should, we fear, record a recent reaction to a point still farther removed from what is rational than that touched at the former period. At this hour religious considerations are paramount, as perhaps they never were before, in determining political attitudes; nor is there much reason to hope for a speedy relinquishment of those barbarous prejudices, and still more barbarous ambitions, out of which this evil state of politics and of society arises. The country struggles on under the pressure of those enormous difficulties so bravely that there is a certain prospect of a better future, which at times cheers men of reason and good sense, who otherwise might despair. But the political and social conflict rages with all its old bitterness. We do not enter here into the question where the blame may lie; but the fact is so, and until that giant obstruction is removed, any substantial advancement of society in Ireland is not to be expected.

We have merely made a hurried reference to Mr. Morley's book, with the design of acknowledging the remarkable ability which characterizes it, and of directing the attention of the more thoughtful of political students to its suggestive pages.

IRISH LAND "PACIFICATION."†

ONE of the most misleading influences in public controversy is the value which comes to be attached to terms that assume what is to be established. Religious equality, free education, tenant-right—whatever the phrases tossed about on the platform, or in the press—the effect of the parrot-utterance of the words is to produce a lazy or wanton assent, among many persons more or less ignorant of what is signified by them. Only thus can certain errors of strong minds, with respect to facts and elementary principles, be accounted for. Men take what has a fair seeming, and obtains apparently so large a recognition, as incontrovertible, and proceed to reason upon that basis with a blind confidence. But the injunction to "prove all things" is eminently necessary to be borne in mind with reference to claims, grievances, schemes of legislation, or theories of any kind, propounded by regenerators of Ireland. To be sceptical as to these is the fittest state of mind in which to approach an examination of any novel principle or project, for the benefit of a population that has unhappily found distraction and torment, not wisdom, in a multitude of counsellors.

The boldest of recent proposers of experiments to pacify Ireland is Mr. J. S. Mill. His name, till lately, carried authority with it, and persons hesitated to dispute any dictum to which it might be attached. But his Irish land-plan is too plainly unjust and impracticable, and the conception of inexperience, to impose upon many, and his pamphlet in which it was put forth found many replies, immediately on being published. Some may think it hardly worth while to slay the slain by giving it yet another and more formal answer, but the danger of allowing the incorrect and mischievous representations abounding in the hasty treatises of party politicians to obtain a hold upon the public, is every day illustrated in the persistency with which previous works of ill-informed essayists are quoted in popular argument.

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* In the modern Welsh *grealon* is a collection.

† "Mr. Mill's Plan for the Pacification of Ireland examined." By Lord Dufferin. London: John Murray, 1868.

"England and Ireland." By John Stuart Mill. London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1868.

Lord Dufferin, of all others, was the student of the "land question," and the Irish proprietor, with full knowledge of the subject from former inquiries and personal experience, best qualified to grapple with Mr. Mill, and once for all, and completely, to disprove his statements, and exhibit the futility of his scheme.

Mr. Mill proposed to bring the landed estates of the proprietors of Ireland to a forced sale. Parliamentary Commissioners would fix the price at their discretion. "Should the rent-roll of any estate be above the figure which may recommend itself to the approval of these gentlemen, it will be reduced to more legitimate proportions, and its owner compensated on the amended valuation. The vacated properties will be handed over to that section of the Irish agricultural class who may happen to be in the occupation of farms at the moment the projected Act receives the Royal assent, and the accruing quit-rents will thenceforth be collected through the instrumentality of government land-agents, government bailiffs, and government process-servers." Stipulations against sub-letting are to be enforced for a limited period against the new proprietors, for the infraction of which they will, it is presumed, "be prosecuted in the courts of law at the public expense, by government officials." "So many of the present owners as may happen to have land in their own hands will be allowed to retain possession of it, at all events until further notice, but all existing leases or other terminable contracts will be overridden by the new settlement." In stating the main features of the "plan," before examining it in principle and detail, Lord Dufferin adds, "Whether perpetuity of possession is to be extended to the conacre cultivator and cottier sub-tenants of the Irish peasantry, Mr. Mill does not mention, but as they amount to several hundred thousand persons, their future status will be worthy of his consideration." Mr. Mill leaves it also unexplained whether, in future, the "aggregation of landed property in Ireland, and the re-creation of tenancies is to be a legal or a criminal proceeding; and on the latter supposition what is to become of the peasant proprietor who, from sickness, infancy, or any temporary impediment, is unable to cultivate his own land, and is forbidden by the law to sublet it?"

The "argument" that "land is a thing which no man made, which exists in limited quantity, which was the original inheritance of all mankind, which, whoever appropriates, keeps others out of its possession," receives attention from Lord Dufferin. The most daring confiscationist hardly ventures to advance it now, but endeavours rather to make out a necessity for a change of proprietorship, and to lay down a scheme to accomplish it which shall be just, as he thinks, to present owners. It is obvious that there are other forms of property which were the "original inheritance of all mankind," and in which those who have no possessions might claim an interest quite as reasonably as in land. No doubt the admission of the one claim would rapidly be followed by the setting up of the other.

One actual case is a better test of a plan than a broad sheet of reasonings, and Mr. Mill's powerful opponent presents to his notice one of the many contingencies that would result from his arrangement, on the new owner being precluded from "letting his land at a competitive rent, or for a terminable period," when the tenure shall be permanent, and the rent fixed by government. "A 'peasant proprietor' dies, leaving a widow and a young family. Their only support is the farm, but, from ill health, or from want of agricultural skill, the widow feels herself incompetent to conduct an agricultural enterprise. Under ordinary circumstances she would let her farm to some neighbour till her son was grown up. But from such a course she is to be rigorously excluded. No terminable tenures are allowed. Her only alternative is to give up the place for good and all. She accordingly advertizes for a tenant; a dozen competitors present themselves; a government officer comes down and fixes the future rent of the place, which we must now suppose to be composed of two elements—the original rent paid by the deceased tenant, and the additional annual value acquired by the farm from his improvements—the former being a charge due to the government, the latter to the widow. But, though unable to receive more than the Parliamentary amount, the widow has the right to choose her tenant. Which of the dozen will she take? Why, the man who will pay her down the largest premium for selecting him. The sum-total of the arrangement being—the turning of the original occupants out of their property, the re-creation of a petty landlordism, and the imposition of a rack-rent, and of a rack-rent in its worst form, that of a high rent fined down by the payment of a large sum on entry." Having got a new tenant at a rack-rent, and a landlord dependent for her bread on the punctual payment of that rent, what will follow? "Supposing the strain of the situation proves too much for the tenant, as it probably would, he will then resort to the well-known processes by which an agricultural catastrophe is deferred: he will scourge his land with flax, he will grow white crops in succession, he will sell part of his stock, and, as a consequence, deprive himself of manure. Year after year, though the rent be paid, the land is gradually growing out of heart. At last, even the rent cannot be scraped together, and the widow-landlord unexpectedly finds herself deprived of the sum upon which she was depending for the maintenance of her family, and must take legal proceedings to enable her to re-enter into possession of her land." But this is not the worst. She again tries to let the farm, but the government officer discovers that, in consequence of the bad treatment it has received at the hands of the last tenant, it is now worth 5*s.* an acre less than it was before. The fertility of land is not indestructible: its productive power can be "as easily squandered as a handful of guineas," and if the peasant-landlord is to have the right to evict the peasant-tenant for injurious farming, "to what ubiquitous court of appeal is he to resort when he perceives, or thinks he perceives, the first signs of a deteriorated cultivation?"

When the government had become universal landlord, how would it proceed to manage the enormous property it had taken into its hands? "Just like any other absentee landlord. It must have its innumerable staff of agents, bailiffs, lawyers, and rent collectors. If its tenants neglect to pay their rents, or exhaust the land by bad cultivation, it must resort to the usual processes for the recovery of rent, and the prevention of waste, now adopted by existing landlords. If it wishes to discharge those duties which are acknowledged to belong to the ownership of land—to undertake great works of drainage, to assist its tenantry in the erection of permanent improvements—it must make a descent into the pocket of the British tax-payer, as the revenues of its estates have been alienated to another purpose. If a second time a blight should overspread the 1,000,000 acres now under potatoes in Ireland, the burden of supporting the starving population should fall, not on the rental of the kingdom, as it did in 1846, but on the Consolidated Fund, from which inexhaustible source would also be derived the incomes of the thousand functionaries necessary to the management of a property of 15,000,000 acres."

The last observation will show that the picture is in no respect overdrawn. The responsibilities, moral and pecuniary, borne with comparative ease as spread over the many landlords of the country, would crush the State if it took them upon its own shoulders. Its administration of great departments is not so successful as to encourage confidence in its management of an enormous land-scheme, with all its complicated problems and processes, its sudden emergencies, and difficulties neither to be foreseen nor averted by any code of procedure. Lord Dufferin asks the simple question which occurs to every mind, and to which Mr. Mill cannot make a reply that will satisfy the least critical of his readers: "How shall we prevent the ignorant peasants of Donegal or Mayo from confounding the harsh acts of the English Legislature, in its capacity of landlord, with its would-be beneficent attitude of a paternal government?" Would its efforts to regain possession of large tracts of country from its peasant-landlords or peasant-tenants, in the event of non-fulfilment of obligations, be calculated to quicken the attachment of the cultivators to British rule? It must be remembered that Mr. Mill puts forward his plan as one for the "pacification" of Ireland. Would wholesale evictions pacify?—would ejectment by State officers produce no reprisals? "On the other hand, how could we intrust the power of providing pecuniary obligations, and the enormous influence such a privilege would imply, to any individual or to any Board, more especially when we remember that it could only be exercised through several thousand agents, belonging to every grade of life, who would thus acquire the opportunity of indulging their worst passions, whether of vindictiveness or of cupidity, at the expense of the Irish peasantry ?" In fine, Mr. Mill's scheme of government landlordship and administration would render it impossible for the country ever to escape from the miseries of agrarian strife and crime, and the shocks of chronic rebellion.

We are sorry to be obliged to say it, but it is the truth, that Mr. Mill displays, almost in every page of the treatise in which this "plan" is developed, a rudimental ignorance of Irish land-relations, and the peculiarities of Irish society. That ignorance Lord Dufferin exposes all the more effectively from his perfect equanimity as a critic. The temptations to be satirical and severe at the Philosopher's expense were very great. Lord Dufferin, however, addresses himself to the subject in the same spirit that has characterized all his works on the question of Landlord and Tenant, and the result is an entire demolition of the crazy structure raised in his study by the accomplished theorist.

The final passages of Lord Dufferin's answer are not the least telling. He asks Mr. Mill and others what do they imagine is likely to be the practical effect of their proceedings? If the landlords of Ireland adopt his opinions out of deference to his authority, they are bound by the same motive to believe in his predictions; and when he assures them that a democratic Parliament of the future will carry his proposals into effect, they must prepare for that evil day. How will they set their house, or rather their land—in order ? "Every landlord with a grain of sense in his composition, will at once cease to spend money on an estate which in a few years will belong to some one else. Outstanding arrears will be called in. All cottage-building, and farm-improvements will be discontinued from one end of the kingdom to the other . . . If any of us desire to retain possession of any portion of our estates, the only plan will be to serve notices to quit on the occupiers of the lands we wish to secure . . . The one individual whose interests will be comparatively unaffected in the general crush, will be the persistent absentee, whose affections have never been entangled in his estate, whose revenues have never contributed to its improvement, and to whom it will be a matter of indifference whether his rents are collected for him free of charge by the government, or by an agent with a salary of £1,000 a year." The solemn language employed by so calm a writer as Lord Dufferin, in describing the injurious character of such a change, is sufficient in itself to startle those who speak or write in haste, and without information. "As for myself," says this Irish statesman, "I would rather be in my grave than see my country become the theatre of so disastrous an experiment."

Not only do the proprietors of Ireland, but all who love their country, and desire to see it wisely governed, and "pacified" by just legislation alone, owe the deepest debt of gratitude to Lord Dufferin for his earnest, prompt, and complete dealing with imposing theories on Land, and projects of Land-laws, which, as supported by the names of men in favour with large classes of the public, would otherwise have wrought the most serious mischief. If no section of the daily press ventures now to push Mr. Mill's scheme, or Mr. Bright's, or Mr. Butt's, or any other of the confiscatory and foolish proposals that have been put forward, the triumph for common sense and experience, over unsound views, is due to the labours of the author of the searching and unanswerable Pamphlet upon which these observations are based.

GREEN TEA.

A CASE REPORTED BY MARTIN HESSELIUS, THE GERMAN PHYSICIAN.

In Ten Chapters. Preface.

Though carefully educated in medicine and surgery, I have never practised either. The study of each continues, nevertheless, to interest me profoundly. Neither idleness nor caprice caused my secession from the honourable profession which I had just entered. The cause was a very trifling scratch inflicted by a dissecting-knife. This trifle cost me the loss of two fingers, amputated promptly, and the more painful loss of my health, for I have never been quite well since, and have seldom been twelve months together in the same place.

In my wanderings I became acquainted with Dr. Martin Hesselius, a wanderer like myself, like me a physician, and like me an enthusiast in his profession. Unlike me in this, that his wanderings were voluntary, and he a man, if not of fortune, as we estimate fortune in England, at least in what our forefathers used to term "easy circumstances."

In Dr. Martin Hesselius I found my master. His knowledge was immense, his grasp of a case was an intuition. He was the very man to inspire a young enthusiast, like me, with awe and delight. My admiration has stood the test of time and survived the separation of death. I am sure it was well-founded.

For nearly twenty years I acted as his medical secretary. His immense collection of papers he has left in my care, to be arranged, indexed, and bound. His treatment of some of these cases is curious. He writes in two distinct characters. He describes what he saw and heard as an intelligent layman might, and when in this style of narrative he has seen the patient either through his own hall-door, to the light of day, or through the gates of darkness to the caverns of the dead, he returns upon the narrative, and in the terms of his art, and with all the force and originality of genius, proceeds to the work of analysis, diagnosis, and illustration.

Here and there a case strikes me as of a kind to amuse or horrify a lay reader with an interest quite different from the peculiar one which it may possess for an expert. With slight modifications, chiefly of language, and of course a change of names, I copy the following. The narrator is Dr. Martin Hesselius. I find it among the voluminous notes of cases which he made during a tour in England about fifty-four years ago.

It is related in a series of letters to his friend Professor Van Loo of Leyden. The professor was not a physician, but a chemist, and a man who read history and metaphysics and medicine, and had, in his day, written a play.

The narrative is therefore, if somewhat less valuable as a medical record, necessarily written in a manner more likely to interest an unlearned reader.

These letters, from a memorandum attached, appear to have been returned on the death of the professor, in 1819, to Dr. Hesselius. They are written, some in English, some in French, but the greater part in German. I am a faithful, though I am conscious, by no means a graceful, translator, and although, here and there, I omit some passages, and shorten others, and disguise names, I have interpolated nothing.

CHAPTER I. DR. HESSELIUS RELATES HOW HE MET THE REV. MR. JENNINGS.

The Rev. Mr. Jennings is tall and thin. He is middle-aged, and dresses with a natty, old-fashioned, high-church precision. He is naturally a little stately, but not at all stiff. His features, without being handsome, are well formed, and their expression extremely kind, but also shy.

I met him one evening at Lady Mary Heyduke's. The modesty and benevolence of his countenance are extremely prepossessing.

We were but a small party, and he joined agreeably enough in the conversation. He seems to enjoy listening very much more than contributing to the talk; but what he says is always to the purpose and well said. He is a great favourite of Lady Mary's, who, it seems, consults him upon many things, and thinks him the most happy and blessed person on earth. Little knows she about him.

The Rev. Mr. Jennings is a bachelor, and has, they say, sixty thousand pounds in the funds. He is a charitable man. He is most anxious to be actively employed in his sacred profession, and yet, though always tolerably well elsewhere, when he goes down to his vicarage in Warwickshire, to engage in the active duties of his sacred calling, his health soon fails him, and in a very strange way. So says Lady Mary.

There is no doubt that Mr. Jennings's health does break down in, generally, a sudden and mysterious way, sometimes in the very act of officiating in his old and pretty church at Kenlis. It may be his heart, it may be his brain. But so it has happened three or four times, or oftener, that after proceeding a certain way in the service, he has on a sudden stopped short, and after a silence, apparently quite unable to resume, he has fallen into solitary, inaudible prayer, his hands and eyes uplifted, and then pale as death, and in the agitation of a strange shame and horror, descended trembling, got into the vestry-room, and left his congregation, without explanation, to themselves. This occurred when his curate was absent. When he goes down to Kenlis, now, he always takes care to provide a clergyman to share his duty, and to supply his place on the instant, should he become thus suddenly incapacitated.

When Mr. Jennings breaks down quite, and beats a retreat from the vicarage, and returns to London, where, in a dark street off Piccadilly, he inhabits a very narrow house, Lady Mary says that he is always perfectly well. I have my own opinion about that. There are degrees of course. We shall see.

Mr. Jennings is a perfectly gentlemanlike man. People, however, remark something odd. There is an impression a little ambiguous. One thing which certainly contributes to it, people, I think, don't remember—perhaps, distinctly remark. But I did, almost immediately. Mr. Jennings has a way of looking sidelong upon the carpet, as if his eye followed the movements of something there. This, of course, is not always. It occurs only now and then. But often enough to give a certain oddity as I have said to his manner, and in this glance travelling along the floor, there is something both shy and anxious.

A medical philosopher, as you are good enough to call me, elaborating theories by the aid of cases sought out by himself, and by him watched and scrutinised with more time at command, and consequently infinitely more minuteness than the ordinary practitioner can afford, falls insensibly into habits of observation which accompany him everywhere, and are exercised, as some people would say, impertinently, upon every subject that presents itself with the least likelihood of rewarding inquiry.

There was a promise of this kind in this slight, timid, kindly, but reserved gentleman, whom I met for the first time at this agreeable little evening gathering. I observed, of course, more than I here set down; but I reserve all that borders on the technical for a strictly scientific paper.

I may remark, that when I here speak of medical science, I do so as I hope some day to see it more generally understood, in a much more comprehensive sense than its generally material treatment would warrant. I believe that the entire natural world is but the ultimate expression of that spiritual world from which, and in which alone, it has its life. I believe that the essential man is a spirit, that the spirit is an organised substance, but as different in point of material from what we ordinarily understand by matter, as light or electricity is; that the material body is, in the most literal sense, a vesture, and death consequently no interruption of the living man's existence, but simply his extrication from the natural body—a process which commences at the moment of what we term death, and the completion of which, at furthest, a few days later, is the resurrection "in power."

The person who weighs the consequences of these positions will probably see their practical bearing upon medical science. This is, however, by no means the proper place for displaying the proofs and discussing the consequences of this too generally unrecognised state of facts.

In pursuance of my habit, I was covertly observing Mr. Jennings, with all my caution—I think he perceived it—and I saw plainly that he was as cautiously observing me. Lady Mary happening to address me by my name, as Dr. Hesselius, I saw that he glanced at me more sharply, and then became thoughtful for a few minutes.

After this, as I conversed with a gentleman at the other end of the room, I saw him look at me more steadily, and with an interest which I thought I understood. I then saw him take an opportunity of chatting with Lady Mary, and was, as one always is, perfectly aware of being the subject of a distant inquiry and answer.

This tall clergyman approached me by-and-by: and in a little time we had got into conversation. When two people, who like reading, and know books and places, having travelled, wish to converse, it is very strange if they can't find topics. It was not accident that brought him near me, and led him into conversation. He knew German, and had read my Essays on Metaphysical Medicine, which suggest more than they actually say.

This courteous man, gentle, shy, plainly a man of thought and reading, who moving and talking among us, was not altogether of us, and whom I already suspected of leading a life whose transactions and alarms were carefully concealed, with an impenetrable reserve from, not only the world, but his best beloved friends—was cautiously weighing in his own mind the idea of taking a certain step with regard to me.

I penetrated his thoughts without his being aware of it, and was careful to say nothing which could betray to his sensitive vigilance my suspicions respecting his position, or my surmises about his plans respecting myself.

We chatted upon indifferent subjects for a time; but at last he said:

"I was very much interested by some papers of yours, Dr. Hesselius, upon what you term Metaphysical Medicine—I read them in German, ten or twelve years ago—have they been translated?"

"No, I'm sure they have not—I should have heard. They would have asked my leave, I think."

"I asked the publishers here, a few months ago, to get the book for me in the original German; but they tell me it is out of print."

"So it is, and has been for some years; but it flatters me as an author to find that you have not forgotten my little book, although," I added, laughing, "ten or twelve years is a considerable time to have managed without it; but I suppose you have been turning the subject over again in your mind, or something has happened lately to revive your interest in it."

At this remark, accompanied by a glance of inquiry, a sudden embarrassment disturbed Mr. Jennings, analogous to that which makes a young lady blush and look foolish. He dropped his eyes, and folded his hands together uneasily, and looked oddly, and you would have said, guilty for a moment.

I helped him out of his awkwardness in the best way, by appearing not to observe it, and going straight on, I said: "Those revivals of interest in a subject happen to me often; one book suggests another, and often sends me back a wild-goose chase over an interval of twenty years. But if you still care to possess a copy, I shall be only too happy to provide you; I have still got two or three by me—and if you allow me to present one I shall be very much honoured."

"You are very good indeed," he said, quite at his ease again, in a moment: "I almost despaired—I don't know how to thank you."

"Pray don't say a word; the thing is really so little worth that I am only ashamed of having offered it, and if you thank me any more I shall throw it into the fire in a fit of modesty."

Mr. Jennings laughed. He inquired where I was staying in London, and after a little more conversation on a variety of subjects, he took his departure.

CHAPTER II. THE DOCTOR QUESTIONS LADY MARY, AND SHE ANSWERS.

"I LIKE your vicar so much, Lady Mary," said I, so soon as he was gone. "He has read, travelled, and thought, and having also suffered, he ought to be an accomplished companion."

"So he is, and, better still, he is a really good man," said she. "His advice is invaluable about my schools, and all my little undertakings at Dawlbridge, and he's so painstaking, he takes so much trouble—you have no idea—wherever he thinks he can be of use: he's so good-natured and so sensible."

"It is pleasant to hear so good an account of his neighbourly virtues. I can only testify to his being an agreeable and gentle companion, and in addition to what you have told me, I think I can tell you two or three things about him," said I.

"Really!"

"Yes, to begin with, he's unmarried."

"Yes, that's right,—go on."

"He has been writing, that is he *was*, but for two or three years, perhaps, he has not gone on with his work, and the book was upon some rather abstract subject—perhaps theology."

"Well, he was writing a book, as you say; I'm not quite sure what it was about, but only that it was nothing that I cared for, very likely you are right, and he certainly did stop—yes."

"And although he only drank a little coffee here to-night, he likes tea, at least, did like it, extravagantly."

"Yes; that's *quite* true."

"He drank green tea, a good deal, didn't he?" I pursued.

"Well, that's very odd! Green tea was a subject on which we used almost to quarrel."

"But he has quite given that up," I continued.

"So he has."

"And, now, one more fact. His mother, or his father, did you know them?"

"Yes, both; his father is only ten years dead, and their place is near Dawlbridge. We knew them very well," she answered.

"Well, either his mother or his father—I should rather think his father—saw a ghost," said I.

"Well, you really are a conjurer, Doctor Hesselius."

"Conjurer or no, haven't I said right?" I answered, merrily.

"You certainly have, and it *was* his father: he was a silent, whimsical man, and he used to bore my father about his dreams, and at last he told him a story about a ghost he had seen and talked with, and a very odd story it was. I remember it particularly because I was so afraid of him. This story was long before he died—when I was quite a child—and his ways were so silent and moping, and he used to drop in, sometimes, in the dusk, when I was alone in the drawing-room, and I used to fancy there were ghosts about him."

I smiled and nodded.

"And now having established my character as a conjurer I think I must say good-night," said I.

"But how *did* you find it out?"

"By the planets of course, as the gipsies do," I answered, and so, gaily, we said good-night.

Next morning I sent the little book he had been inquiring after, and a note to Mr. Jennings, and on returning late that evening, I found that he had called and left his card. He asked whether I was at home, and asked at what hour he would be most likely to find me.

Does he intend opening his case, and consulting me "professionally," as they say? I hope so. I have already conceived a theory about him. It is supported by Lady Mary's answers to my parting questions. I should like much to ascertain from his own lips. But what can I do consistently with good breeding to invite a confession? Nothing. I rather think he meditates one. At all events, my dear Van L., I shan't make myself difficult of access; I mean to return his visit to-morrow. It will be only civil in return for his politeness, to ask to see him. Perhaps something may come of it. Whether much, little, or nothing, my dear Van L., you shall hear.

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GREEN TEA.

A CASE REPORTED BY MARTIN HESSELIUS, THE GERMAN PHYSICIAN.

In Ten Chapters.

CHAPTER III. DR. HESSELIUS PICKS UP SOMETHING IN LATIN BOOKS.

Well, I have called at Blank-street.

On inquiring at the door, the servant told me that Mr. Jennings was engaged very particularly with a gentleman, a clergyman from Kenlis, his parish in the country. Intending to reserve my privilege and to call again, I merely intimated that I should try another time, and had turned to go, when the servant begged my pardon, and asked me, looking at me a little more attentively than well-bred persons of his order usually do, whether I was Dr. Hesselius, and, on learning that I was, he said, "Perhaps then, sir, you would allow me to mention it to Mr. Jennings, for I am sure he wishes to see you."

The servant returned in a moment, with a message from Mr. Jennings, asking me to go into his study, which was in effect his back drawing-room, promising to be with me in a very few minutes.

This was really a study — almost a library. The room was lofty, with two tall slender windows, and rich dark curtains. It was much larger than I had expected, and stored with books on every side, from the floor to the ceiling. The upper carpet—for to my tread it felt that there were two or three—was a Turkey carpet. My steps fell noiselessly. The book-cases standing out, placed the windows, particularly narrow ones, in deep recesses. The effect of the room was, although extremely comfortable, and even luxurious, decidedly gloomy, and aided by the silence, almost oppressive. Perhaps, however, I ought to have allowed something for association. My mind had connected peculiar ideas with Mr. Jennings. I stepped into this perfectly silent room, of a very silent house, with a peculiar foreboding; and its darkness, and solemn clothing of books, for except where two narrow looking-glasses were set in the wall, they were everywhere, helped this sombre feeling.

While awaiting Mr. Jennings's arrival, I amused myself by looking into some of the books with which his shelves were laden. Not among these, but immediately under them, with their backs upward, on the floor, I lighted upon a complete set of Swedenborg's Arcana Cælestia, in the original Latin, a very fine folio set, bound in the natty livery which theology affects, pure vellum, namely, gold letters, and carmine edges. There were paper markers in several of these volumes. I raised and placed them, one after the other, upon the table, and opening where these papers were placed, I read in the solemn Latin phraseology, a series of sentences indicated by a pencilled line at the margin. Of these I copy here a few, translating them into English.

"When man's interior sight is opened, which is that of his spirit, then there appear the things of another life, which cannot possibly be made visible to the bodily sight." . . . .

"By the internal sight it has been granted me to see the things that are in the other life, more clearly than I see those that are in the world. From these considerations, it is evident that external vision exists from interior vision, and this from a vision still more interior, and so on." . . . .

"There are with every man at least two evil spirits." . . . .

"With wicked genii there is also a fluent speech, but harsh and grating. There is also among them, a speech which is not fluent, wherein the dissent of the thoughts is perceived as something secretly creeping along within it." . . . .

"The evil spirits associated with man are, indeed, from the hells, but when with man they are not then in hell, but are taken out thence. The place where they then are is in the midst between heaven and hell, and is called the world of spirits—when the evil spirits who are with man, are in that world, they are not in any infernal torment, but in every thought and affection of the man, and so, in all that the man himself enjoys. But when they are remitted into their hell, they return to their former state." . . . .

"If evil spirits could perceive that they were associated with man, and yet that they were spirits separate from him, and if they could flow in into the things of his body, they would attempt by a thousand means to destroy him; for they hate man with a deadly hatred." . . . .

"Knowing, therefore, that I was a man in the body, they were continually striving to destroy me, not as to the body only, but especially as to the soul; for to destroy any man or spirit is the very delight of the life of all who are in hell; but I have been continually protected by the Lord. Hence it appears how dangerous it is for man to be in a living consort with spirits, unless he be in the good of faith." . . . .

"Nothing is more carefully guarded from the knowledge of associate spirits than their being thus conjoint with a man, for if they knew it they would speak to him, with the intention to destroy him." . . . .

"The delight of hell is to do evil to man, and to hasten his eternal ruin."

A long note, written with a very sharp and fine pencil, in Mr. Jennings's neat hand, at the foot of the page, caught my eye. Expecting his criticism upon the text, I read a word or two, and stopped, for it was something quite different, and began with these words, Deus misereatur mei—"May God compassionate me." Thus warned of its private nature, I averted my eyes, and shut the book, replacing all the volumes as I had found them, except one which interested me, and in which, as men studious and solitary in their habits will do, I grew so absorbed as to take no cognisance of the outer world, nor to remember where I was.

I was reading some pages which refer to "representatives" and "correspondents," in the technical language of Swedenborg, and had arrived at a passage, the substance of which is, that evil spirits, when seen by other eyes than those of their infernal associates, present themselves, by "correspondence," in the shape of the beast (fera) which represents their particular lust and life in aspect direful and atrocious. This is a long passage, and particularises a number of those bestial forms.

CHAPTER IV. FOUR EYES WERE READING THE PASSAGE.

I was running the head of my pencil-case along the line as I read it, and something caused me to raise my eyes.

Directly before me was one of the mirrors I have mentioned, in which I saw reflected the tall shape of my friend Mr. Jennings leaning over my shoulder, and reading the page at which I was busy, and with a face so dark and wild that I should hardly have known him.

I turned and rose. He stood erect also, and with an effort laughed a little, saying:

"I came in and asked you how you did, but without succeeding in awaking you from your book; so I could not restrain my curiosity, and very impertinently, I'm afraid, peeped over your shoulder. This is not your first time of looking into those pages. You have looked into Swedenborg, no doubt, long ago?"

"Oh dear, yes! I owe Swedenborg a great deal; you will discover traces of him in the little book on Metaphysical Medicine, which you were so good as to remember."

Although my friend affected a gaiety of manner, there was a slight flush in his face, and I could perceive that he was inwardly much perturbed.

"I'm scarcely yet qualified, I know so little of Swedenborg. I've only had them a fortnight," he answered, "and I think they are rather likely to make a solitary man nervous—that is, judging from the very little I have read—I don't say that they have made me so," he laughed; "and

I'm so very much obliged for the book. I hope you got my note?"

I made all proper acknowledgments and modest disclaimers.

"I never read a book that I go with so entirely as that of yours," he continued. "I saw at once there is more in it than is quite unfolded. Do you know Dr. Harley?" he asked, rather abruptly.

In passing, the editor remarks that the physician here named was one of the most eminent who ever practised in England.

I did, having had letters to him, and had experienced from him great courtesy and considerable assistance during my visit to England.

"I think that man one of the very greatest fools I ever met in my life," said Mr. Jennings.

This was the first time I had ever heard him say a sharp thing of anybody, and such a term applied to so high a name a little startled me.

"Really! and in what way?" I asked.

"In his profession," he answered.

I smiled.

"I mean this," he said: "he seems to me, one half, blind—I mean one half of all he looks at is dark—preternaturally bright and vivid all the rest; and the worst of it is, it seems *wilful*. I can't get him—I mean he won't—I've had some experience of him as a physician, but I look on him as, in that sense, no better than a paralytic mind, an intellect half dead. I'll tell you—I know I shall some time—all about it," he said, with a little agitation. "You stay some months longer in England. If I should be out of town during your stay for a little time, would you allow me to trouble you with a letter?"

"I should be only too happy," I assured him.

"Very good of you. I am so utterly dissatisfied with Harley."

"A little leaning to the materialistic school," I said.

"A *mere* materialist," he corrected me; "you can't think how that sort of thing worries one who knows better. You won't tell any one—any of my friends you know—that I am hippish; now, for instance, no one knows—not even Lady Mary—that I have seen Dr. Harley, or any other doctor. So pray don't mention it; and, if I should have any threatening of an attack, you'll kindly let me write, or, should I be in town, have a little talk with you."

I was full of conjecture, and unconsciously I found I had fixed my eyes gravely on him, for he lowered his for a moment, and he said:

"I see you think I might as well tell you now, or else you are forming a conjecture; but you may as well give it up. If you were guessing all the rest of your life, you will never hit on it."

He shook his head smiling, and over that wintry sunshine a black cloud suddenly came down, and he drew his breath in, through his teeth, as men do in pain.

"Sorry, of course, to learn that you apprehend occasion to consult any of us; but, command me when and how you like, and I need not assure you that your confidence is sacred."

He then talked of quite other things, and in a comparatively cheerful way; and, after a little time, I took my leave.

CHAPTER V. DOCTOR HESSELIUS IS SUMMONED TO RICHMOND.

We parted cheerfully, but he was not cheerful, nor was I. There are certain expressions of that powerful organ of spirit—the human face—which, although I have seen them often, and possess a doctor's nerve, yet disturb me profoundly. One look of Mr. Jennings haunted me. It had seized my imagination with so dismal a power that I changed my plans for the evening, and went to the opera, feeling that I wanted a change of ideas.

I heard nothing of or from him for two or three days, when a note in his hand reached me. It was cheerful, and full of hope. He said that he had been for some little time so much better—quite well, in fact—that he was going to make a little experiment, and run down for a month or so to his parish, to try whether a little work might not quite set him up. There was in it a fervent religious expression of gratitude for his restoration, as he now almost hoped he might call it.

A day or two later I saw Lady Mary, who repeated what his note had announced, and told me that he was actually in Warwickshire, having resumed his clerical duties at Kenlis; and she added, "I begin to think that he is really perfectly well, and that there never was anything the matter, more than nerves and fancy; we are all nervous, but I fancy there is nothing like a little hard work for that kind of weakness, and he has made up his mind to try it. I should not be surprised if he did not come back for a year."

Notwithstanding all this confidence, only two days later I had this note, dated from his house off Piccadilly:

"Dear sir. I have returned disappointed. If I should feel at all able to see you, I shall write to ask you kindly to call. At present I am too low, and, in fact, simply unable to say all I wish to say. Pray don't mention my name to my friends. I can see no one. By-and-by, please God, you shall hear from me. I mean to take a run into Shropshire, where some of my people are. God bless you! May we, on my return, meet more happily than I can now write."

About a week after this I saw Lady Mary at her own house, the last person, she said, left in town, and just on the wing for Brighton, for the London season was quite over. She told me that she had heard from Mr. Jennings's niece, Martha, in Shropshire. There was nothing to be gathered from her letter, more than that he was low and nervous. In those words, of which healthy people think so lightly, what a world of suffering is sometimes hidden!

Nearly five weeks passed without any further news of Mr. Jennings. At the end of that time I received a note from him. He wrote:

"I have been in the country, and have had change of air, change of scene, change of faces, change of everything and in everything—but *myself.* I have made up my mind, so far as the most irresolute creature on earth can do it, to tell my case fully to you. If your engagements will permit, pray come to me to-day, to-morrow, or the next day; but, pray defer as little as possible. You know not how much I need help. I have a quiet house at Richmond, where I now am. Perhaps you can manage to come to dinner, or to luncheon, or even to tea. You shall have no trouble in finding me out. The servant at Blank-street, who takes this note, will have a carriage at your door at any hour you please; and I am always to be found. You will say that I ought not to be alone. I have tried everything. Come and see."

I called up the servant, and decided on going out the same evening, which accordingly I did.

He would have been much better in a lodging-house, or a hotel, I thought, as I drove up through a short double row of sombre elms to a very old-fashioned brick house, darkened by the foliage of these trees, which over-topped, and nearly surrounded it. It was a perverse choice, for nothing could be imagined more triste and silent. The house, I found, belonged to him. He had stayed for a day or two in town, and, finding it for some cause insupportable, had come out here, probably because being furnished and his own, he was relieved of the thought and delay of selection, by coming here.

The sun had already set, and the red reflected light of the western sky illuminated the scene with the peculiar effect with which we are all familiar. The hall seemed very dark, but, getting to the back drawing-room, whose windows command the west, I was again in the same dusky light. I sat down, looking out upon the richly-wooded landscape that glowed in the grand and melancholy light which was every moment fading. The corners of the room were already dark; all was growing dim, and the gloom was insensibly toning my mind, already prepared for what was sinister. I was waiting alone for his arrival, which soon took place. The door communicating with the front room opened, and the tall figure of Mr. Jennings, faintly seen in the ruddy twilight, came, with quiet stealthy steps, into the room.

We shook hands, and, taking a chair to the window, where there was still light enough to enable us to see each other's faces, he sat down beside me, and, placing his hand upon my arm, with scarcely a word of preface, began his narrative.

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GREEN TEA.

A CASE REPORTED BY MARTIN HESSELIUS, THE GERMAN PHYSICIAN.

IN TEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER VI. HOW MR. JENNINGS MET HIS COMPANION.

The faint glow of the west, the pomp of the then lonely woods of Richmond, were before us, behind and about us the darkening room, and on the stony face of the sufferer—for the character of his face, though still gentle and secret, was changed—rested that dim, odd glow which seems to descend and produce, where it touches, lights, sudden though faint, which are lost, almost without gradation, in darkness. The silence, too, was utter; not a distant wheel, or bark, or whistle from without; and within the depressing stillness of an invalid bachelor's house.

I guessed well the nature, though not even vaguely the particulars, of the revelations I was about to receive, from that fixed face of suffering that, so oddly flushed, stood out, like a portrait of Schalken's, before its background of darkness.

"It began," he said, "on the 15th of October, three years and eleven weeks ago, and two days—I keep very accurate count, for every day is torment. If I leave anywhere a chasm in my narrative tell me.

"About four years ago I began a work, which had cost me very much thought and reading. It was upon the religious metaphysics of the ancients."

"I know," said I; "the actual religion of educated and thinking paganism, quite apart from symbolic worship? A wide and very interesting field."

"Yes; but not good for the mind—the Christian mind, I mean. Paganism is all bound together in essential unity, and, with evil sympathy, their religion involves their art, and both their manners, and the subject is a degrading fascination and the nemesis sure. God forgive me!

"I wrote a great deal; I wrote late at night. I was always thinking on the subject, walking about, wherever I was, everywhere. It thoroughly infected me. You are to remember that all the material ideas connected with it were more or less of the beautiful, the subject itself delightfully interesting, and I, then, without a care."

He sighed heavily.

"I believe that every one who sets about writing in earnest does his work, as a friend of mine phrased it, *on* something—tea, or coffee, or tobacco. I suppose there is a material waste that must be hourly supplied in such occupations, or that we should grow too abstracted, and the mind, as it were, pass out of the body, unless it were reminded often of the connexion by actual sensation. At all events, I felt the want, and I supplied it. Tea was my companion—at first the ordinary black tea, made in the usual way, not too strong; but I drank a great deal, and increased its strength as I went on. I never experienced an uncomfortable symptom from it. I began to take a little green tea. I found the effect pleasanter, it cleared and intensified the power of thought so. I had come to take it frequently, but not stronger than one might take it for pleasure. I wrote a great deal out here, it was so quiet, and in this room. I used to sit up very late, and it became a habit with me to sip my tea—green tea—every now and then as my work proceeded. I had a little kettle on my table, that swung over a lamp, and made tea two or three times between eleven o'clock and two or three in the morning, my hours of going to bed. I used to go into town every day. I was not a monk, and, although I often spent an hour or two in a library, hunting up authorities and looking out lights upon my theme, I was in no morbid state, so far as I can judge. I met my friends pretty much as usual, and enjoyed their society, and, on the whole, existence had never been, I think, so pleasant before.

"I had met with a man who had some odd old books, German editions in mediæval Latin, and I was only too happy to be permitted access to them. This obliging person's books were in the City, a very out-of-the-way part of it. I had rather out-stayed my intended hour, and, on coming out, seeing no cab near, I was tempted to get into the omnibus which used to drive past this house. It was darker than this by the time the 'bus had reached an old house, you may have remarked, with four poplars at each side of the door, and there the last passenger but myself got out. We drove along rather faster. It was twilight now. I leaned back in my corner next the door ruminating pleasantly.

"The interior of the omnibus was nearly dark. I had observed in the corner opposite to me at the other side, and at the end next the horses, two small circular reflections, as it seemed to me, of a reddish light. They were about two inches apart, and about the size of those small brass buttons that yachting men used to put upon their jackets. I began to speculate, as listless men will, upon this trifle, as it seemed. From what centre did that faint but deep red light come, and from what—glass beads, buttons, toy decorations—was it reflected? We were lumbering along gently, having nearly a mile still to go. I had not solved the puzzle, and it became in another minute more odd, for these two luminous points, with a sudden jerk, descended nearer the floor, keeping still their relative distance and horizontal position, and then, as suddenly, they rose to the level of the seat on which I was sitting, and I saw them no more.

"My curiosity was now really excited, and, before I had time to think, I saw again these two dull lamps, again together near the floor; again they disappeared, and again in their old corner I saw them.

"So, keeping my eyes upon them, I edged quietly up my own side, towards the end at which I still saw these tiny discs of red.

"There was very little light in the 'bus. It was nearly dark. I leaned forward to aid my endeavour to discover what these little circles really were. They shifted their position a little as I did so. I began now to perceive an outline of something black, and I soon saw with tolerable distinctness the outline of a small black monkey, pushing its face forward in mimicry to meet mine; those were its eyes, and I now dimly saw its teeth grinning at me.

"I drew back, not knowing whether it might not meditate a spring. I fancied that one of the passengers had forgot this ugly pet, and wishing to ascertain something of its temper, though not caring to trust my fingers to it, I poked my umbrella softly towards it. It remained immovable—up to it—*through* it! For through it, and back and forward, it passed, without the slightest resistance.

"I can't, in the least, convey to you the kind of horror that I felt. When I had ascertained that the thing was an illusion, as I then supposed, there came a misgiving about myself and a terror that fascinated me in impotence to remove my gaze from the eyes of the brute for some moments. As I looked, it made a little skip back, quite into the corner, and I, in a panic, found myself at the door, having put my head out, drawing deep breaths of the outer air, and staring at the lights and trees we were passing, too glad to reassure myself of reality.

"I stopped the 'bus, and got out. I perceived the man look oddly at me as I paid him. I dare say there was something unusual in my looks and manner, for I had never felt so strangely before."

CHAPTER VII. THE JOURNEY: FIRST STAGE.

"When the omnibus drove on, and I was alone upon the road, I looked carefully round to ascertain whether the monkey had followed me. To my indescribable relief I saw it nowhere. I can't describe easily what a shock I had received, and my sense of genuine gratitude on finding myself, as I supposed, quite rid of it.

"I had got out a little before we reached this house, two or three hundred steps away. A brick wall runs along the footpath, and inside the wall is a hedge of yew or some dark evergreen of that kind, and within that again the row of fine trees which you may have remarked as you came.

"This brick wall is about as high as my shoulder, and happening to raise my eyes I saw the monkey, with that stooping gait, on all fours, walking or creeping, close beside me on top of the wall. I stopped looking at it with a feeling of loathing and horror. As I stopped so did it. It sat up on the wall with its long hands on its knees looking at me. There was not light enough to see it much more than in outline, nor was it dark enough to bring the peculiar light of its eyes into strong relief. I still saw, however, that red foggy light plainly enough. It did not show its teeth, nor exhibit any sign of irritation, but seemed jaded and sulky, and was observing me steadily.

"I drew back into the middle of the road. It was an unconscious recoil, and there I stood, still looking at it. It did not move.

"With an instinctive determination to try something—anything, I turned about and walked briskly towards town with a scaunce look, all the time watching the movements of the beast. It crept swiftly along the wall, at exactly my pace.

"Where the wall ends, near the turn of the road, it came down and with a wiry spring or two brought itself close to my feet, and continued to keep up to me, as I quickened my pace. It was at my left side, so close to my leg that I felt every moment as if I should tread upon it.

"The road was quite deserted and silent, and it was darker every moment. I stopped dismayed and bewildered, turning as I did so, the other way—I mean, towards this house, away from which I had been walking. When I stood still, the monkey drew back to a distance of, I suppose, about five or six yards, and remained stationary, watching me.

"I had been more agitated than I have said. I had read, of course, as every one has, something about 'spectral illusions,' as you physicians term the phenomena of such cases. I considered my situation and looked my misfortune in the face.

"These affections, I had read, are sometimes transitory and sometimes obstinate. I had read of cases in which the appearance, at first harmless, had, step by step, degenerated into something direful and insupportable, and ended by wearing its victim out. Still as I stood there, but for my bestial companion, quite alone, I tried to comfort myself by repeating again and again the assurance, 'the thing is purely disease, a well-known physical affection, as distinctly as small-pox or neuralgia. Doctors are all agreed on that, philosophy demonstrates it. I must not be a fool. I've been sitting up too late, and I dare say my digestion is quite wrong, and with God's help, I shall be all right, and this is but a symptom of nervous dyspepsia.' Did I believe all this? Not one word of it, no more than any other miserable being ever did who is once seized and riveted in this satanic captivity. Against my convictions, I might say my knowledge, I was simply bullying myself into a false courage.

"I now walked homeward. I had only a few hundred yards to go. I had forced myself into a sort of resignation, but I had not got over the sickening shock and the flurry of the first certainty of my misfortune.

"I made up my mind to pass the night at home. The brute moved close beside me, and I fancied there was the sort of anxious drawing toward the house, which one sees in tired horses or dogs, sometimes as they come toward home.

"I was afraid to go into town—I was afraid of any one's seeing and recognising me. I was conscious of an irrepressible agitation in my manner. Also, I was afraid of any violent change in my habits, such as going to a place of amusement, or walking from home in order to fatigue myself. At the hall-door it waited till I mounted the steps, and when the door was opened entered with me.

"I drank no tea that night. I got

cigars and some brandy-and-water. My idea was that I should act upon my material system, and by living for a while in sensation apart from thought, send myself forcibly, as it were, into a new groove. I came up here to this drawing-room. I sat just here. The monkey got upon a small table that then stood *there*. It looked dazed and languid. An irrepressible uneasiness as to its movements kept my eyes always upon it. Its eyes were half-closed, but I could see them glow. It was looking steadily at me. In all situations, at all hours, it is awake and looking at me. That never changes.

"I shall not continue in detail my narrative of this particular night. I shall describe, rather, the phenomena of the first year, which never varied, collectively. I shall describe the monkey as it appeared in daylight. In the dark, as you shall presently hear, there are peculiarities. It is a small monkey, perfectly black. It had only one peculiarity—a character of malignity—unfathomable malignity. During the first year it looked sullen and sick. But this character of intense malice and vigilance was always underlying that surly languor. During all that time it acted as if on a plan of giving me as little trouble as was consistent with watching me. Its eyes were never off me. I have never lost sight of it, except in my sleep, light or dark, day or night, since it came here, excepting when it withdraws for some weeks at a time, unaccountably.

"In total dark it is visible as in daylight. I do not mean merely its eyes. It is *all* visible distinctly in a halo that resembles a glow of red embers, and which accompanies it in all its movements.

"When it leaves me for a time, it is always at night, in the dark, and in the same way. It grows at first uneasy, and then furious, and then advances towards me, grinning and shaking its paws clenched, and, at the same time, there comes the appearance of fire in the grate. I never have any fire. I can't sleep in the room where there is any, and it draws nearer and nearer to the chimney, quivering, it seems, with rage, and when its fury rises to the highest pitch, it springs into the grate, and up the chimney, and I see it no more.

"When first this happened I thought I was released. I was a new man. A day passed—a night—and no return, and a blessed week—a week—another week. I was always on my knees, Dr. Hesselius, always, thanking God and praying. A whole month passed of liberty, but on a sudden, it was with me again."

CHAPTER VIII. THE SECOND STAGE.

"It was with me, and the malice which before was torpid under a sullen exterior, was now active. It was perfectly unchanged in every other respect. This new energy was apparent in its activity and its looks, and soon in other ways.

"For a time, you will understand, the change was shown only in an increased vivacity, and an air of menace, as if it was always brooding over some atrocious plan. Its eyes, as before, were never off me."

"Is it here now?" I asked.

"No," he replied, "it has been absent exactly a fortnight and a day—fifteen days. It has sometimes been away so long as nearly two months, once for three. Its absence always exceeds a fortnight, although it may be but by a single day. Fifteen days having past since I saw it last, it may return now at any moment."

"Is its return," I asked, "accompanied by any peculiar manifestation?"

"Nothing—no," he said. "It is simply with me again. On lifting my eyes from a book, or turning my head, I see it, as usual, looking at me, and then it remains, as before, for its appointed time. I have never told so much and so minutely before to any one."

I perceived that he was agitated, and looking like death, and he repeatedly applied his handkerchief to his forehead, and I suggested that he might be tired, and told him that I would call, with pleasure, in the morning, but he said:

"No, if you don't mind hearing it all now. I have got so far, and I should prefer making one effort of it. When I spoke to Dr. Harley, I had nothing like so much to tell. You are a philosophic physician. You give spirit its proper rank. If this thing is real——"

He paused, looking at me with agitated inquiry.

"We can discuss it by-and-by, and very fully. I will give you all I think," I answered, after an interval.

"Well—very well. If it is anything real, I say, it is prevailing, little by little, and drawing me more interiorly into hell. Optic nerves, he talked of. Ah! well—there are other nerves of communication. May God Almighty help me! You shall hear.

"Its power of action, I tell you, had

increased. Its malice became, in a way, aggressive. About two years ago, some questions that were pending between me and the bishop, having been settled, I went down to my parish in Warwickshire, anxious to find occupation in my profession. I was not prepared for what happened, although I have since thought I might have apprehended something like it. The reason of my saying so, is this——"

He was beginning to speak with a great deal more effort and reluctance, and sighed often, and seemed at times nearly overcome. But at this time his manner was not agitated. It was more like that of a sinking patient, who has given himself up.

"Yes, but I will first tell you about Kenlis, my parish.

"It was with me when I left this for Dawlbridge. It was my silent travelling companion, and it remained with me at the vicarage. When I entered on the discharge of my duties, another change took place. The thing exhibited an atrocious determination to thwart me. It was with me in the church—in the reading-desk—in the pulpit—within the communion-rails. At last, it reached this extremity, that while I was reading to the congregation, it would spring upon the open book and squat there, so that I was unable to see the page. This happened more than once.

"I left Dawlbridge for a time. I placed myself in Dr. Harley's hands. I did everything he told me. He gave my case a great deal of thought. It interested him, I think. He seemed successful. For nearly three months I was perfectly free from a return. I began to think I was safe. With his full assent I returned to Dawlbridge.

"I travelled in a chaise. I was in good spirits. I was more—I was happy and grateful. I was returning, as I thought, delivered from a dreadful hallucination, to the scene of duties which I longed to enter upon. It was a beautiful sunny evening, everything looked serene and cheerful, and I was delighted. I remember looking out of the window to see the spire of my church at Kenlis among the trees, at the point where one has the earliest view of it. It is exactly where the little stream that bounds the parish, passes under the road by a culvert, and where it emerges at the road-side, a stone with an old inscription is placed. As we passed this point, I drew my head in and sat down, and in the corner of the chaise was the monkey.

"For a moment I felt faint, and then quite wild with despair and horror. I called to the driver, and got out, and sat down at the road-side, and prayed to God silently for mercy. A despairing resignation supervened. My companion was with me as I re-entered the vicarage. The same persecution followed. After a short struggle I submitted, and soon I left the place.

"I told you," he said "that the beast has before this become in certain ways aggressive. I will explain a little. It seemed to be actuated by intense and increasing fury, whenever I said my prayers, or even meditated prayer. It amounted at last to a dreadful interruption. You will ask, how could a silent immaterial phantom effect that? It was thus, whenever I meditated praying; it was always before me, and nearer and nearer.

"It used to spring on a table, on the back of a chair, on the chimney-piece, and slowly to swing itself from side to side, looking at me all the time. There is in its motion an indefinable power to dissipate thought, and to contract one's attention to that monotony, till the ideas shrink, as it were, to a point, and at last to nothing—and unless I had started up, and shook off the catalepsy I have felt as if my mind were on the point of losing itself. There are other ways," he sighed heavily; "thus, for instance, while I pray with my eyes closed, it comes closer and closer, and I see it. I know it is not to be accounted for physically, but I do actually see it, though my lids are closed, and so it rocks my mind, as it were, and overpowers me, and I am obliged to rise from my knees. If you had ever yourself known this, you would be acquainted with desperation."

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GREEN TEA.

A CASE REPORTED BY MARTIN HESSELIUS, THE GERMAN PHYSICIAN.

In Ten Chapters.

CHAPTER IX. THE THIRD STAGE.

"I see, Dr. Hesselius, that you don't lose one word of my statement. I need not ask you to listen specially to what I am now going to tell you. They talk of the optic nerves, and of spectral illusions, as if the organ of sight was the only point assailable by the influences that have fastened upon me—I know better. For two years in my direful case that limitation prevailed. But as food is taken in softly at the lips, and then brought under the teeth, as the tip of the little finger caught in a mill-crank will draw in the hand, and the arm, and the whole body, so the miserable mortal who has been once caught firmly by the end of the finest fibre of his nerve, is drawn in and in, by the enormous machinery of hell, until he is as I am. Yes, doctor, as *I* am, for while I talk to you, and implore relief, I feel that my prayer is for the impossible, and my pleading with the inexorable."

I endeavoured to calm his visibly increasing agitation, and told him that he must not despair.

While we talked the night had overtaken us. The filmy moonlight was wide over the scene which the window commanded, and I said:

"Perhaps you would prefer having candles. This light, you know, is odd. I should wish you, as much as possible, under your usual conditions while I make my diagnosis, shall I call it—otherwise I don't care."

"All lights are the same to me," he said: "except when I read or write, I care not if night were perpetual. I am going to tell you what happened about a year ago. The thing began to speak to me."

"Speak! How do you mean—speak as a man does, do you mean?"

"Yes; speak in words and consecutive sentences, with perfect coherence and articulation; but there is a peculiarity. It is not like the tone of a human voice. It is not by my ears it reaches me—it comes like a singing through my head.

"This faculty, the power of speaking to me, will be my undoing. It won't let me pray, it interrupts me with dreadful blasphemies. I dare not go on, I could not. Oh! doctor, can the skill, and thought, and prayers of man avail me nothing!"

"You must promise me, my dear sir, not to trouble yourself with unnecessarily exciting thoughts; confine yourself strictly to the narrative of *facts;* and recollect, above all, that even if the thing that infests you be as you seem to suppose, a reality with an actual independent life and will, yet it can have no power to hurt you, unless it be given from above: its access to your senses depends mainly upon your physical condition—this is, under God, your comfort and reliance: we are all alike environed. It is only that in your case, the 'paries,' the veil of the flesh, the screen, is a little out of repair, and sights and sounds are transmitted. We must enter on a new course, sir—be encouraged. I'll give to-night to the careful consideration of the whole case."

"You are very good, sir; you think it worth trying, you don't give me quite up; but, sir, you don't know, it is gaining such an influence over me: it orders me about, it is such a tyrant, and I'm growing so helpless. May God deliver me!"

"It orders you about—of course you mean by speech?"

"Yes, yes; it is always urging me to crimes, to injure others, or myself. You see, doctor, the situation is urgent, it is indeed. When I was in Shropshire, a few weeks ago" (Mr. Jennings was speaking rapidly and trembling now, holding my arm with one hand, and looking in my face), "I went out one day with a party of friends for a walk: my persecutor, I tell you, was with me at the time. I lagged behind the rest: the country near the Dee, you know, is beautiful. Our path happened to lie near a coal mine, and at the verge of the wood is a perpendicular shaft, they say, a hundred and fifty feet deep. My niece had remained behind with me—she knows, of course, nothing of the nature of my sufferings. She knew, however, that I had been ill, and was low, and she remained to prevent my being quite alone. As we loitered slowly on together the brute that accompanied me was urging me to throw myself down the shaft. I tell you now—oh, sir, think of it!—the one consideration that saved me from that hideous death was the fear lest the shock of witnessing the occurrence should be too much for the poor girl. I asked her to go on and take her walk with her friends, saying that I could go no further. She made excuses, and the more I urged her the firmer she became. She looked doubtful and frightened. I suppose there was something in my looks or manner that alarmed her; but she would not go, and that literally saved me. You had no idea, sir, that a living man could be made so abject a slave of Satan," he said, with a ghastly groan and a shudder.

There was a pause here, and I said, "You *were* preserved nevertheless. It was the act of God. You are in his hands and in the power of no other being: be therefore confident for the future."

CHAPTER X. HOME.

I MADE him have candles lighted, and saw the room looking cheery and inhabited before I left him. I told him that he must regard his illness strictly as one dependent on physical, though *subtle* physical, causes. I told him that he had evidence of God's care and love in the deliverance which he had just described, and that I had perceived with pain that he seemed to regard its peculiar features as indicating that he had been delivered over to spiritual reprobation. Than such a conclusion nothing could be, I insisted, less warranted; and not only so, but more contrary to facts, as disclosed in his mysterious deliverance from that murderous influence during his Shropshire excursion. First, his niece had been retained by his side without his intending to keep her near him; and, secondly, there had been infused into his mind an irresistible repugnance to execute the dreadful suggestion in her presence.

As I reasoned this point with him, Mr. Jennings wept. He seemed comforted. One promise I exacted, which was that should the monkey at any time return, I should be sent for immediately; and, repeating my assurance that I would give neither time nor thought to any other subject until I had thoroughly investigated his case, and that to-morrow he should hear the result, I took my leave.

Before getting into the carriage I told

the servant that his master was far from well, and that he should make a point of frequently looking into his room.

My own arrangements I made with a view to being quite secure from interruption.

I merely called at my lodgings, and, with a travelling-desk and carpet-bag, set off in a hackney-carriage for an inn about two miles out of town, called The Horns, a very quiet and comfortable house, with good thick walls. And there I resolved, without the possibility of intrusion or distraction, to devote some hours of the night, in my comfortable sitting-room, to Mr. Jennings's case, and so much of the morning as it might require.

(There occurs here a careful note of Dr. Hesselius's opinion upon the case, and of the habits, dietary, and medicines which he prescribed. It is curious—some people would say mystical. But on the whole I doubt whether it would sufficiently interest a reader of the kind I am likely to meet with to warrant its being here reprinted. This whole letter was plainly written at the inn in which he had hid himself for the occasion. The next letter is dated from his town lodgings.)

I left town for the inn where I slept last night at half-past nine, and did not arrive at my room in town until one o'clock this afternoon. I found a letter in Mr. Jennings's hand upon my table. It had not come by post, and on inquiry, I learned that Mr. Jennings's servant had brought it, and on learning that I was not to return until to-day, and that no one could tell him my address, he seemed very uncomfortable, and said that his orders from his master were that he was not to return without an answer.

I opened the letter, and read:

"Dear Dr. Hesselius. It is here. You had not been an hour gone when it returned. It is speaking. It knows all that has happened. It knows everything—it knows you, and is frantic and atrocious. It reviles. I send you this. It knows every word I have written—I write. This I promised, and I therefore write, but I fear very confused, very incoherently. I am so interrupted, disturbed.

"Ever yours, sincerely yours,
"Robert Lynder Jennings."

"When did this come?" I asked.

"About eleven last night; the man was here again, and has been here three times to-day. The last time is about an hour since."

Thus answered, and with the notes I had made upon his case in my pocket, I was, in a few minutes, driving out to Richmond, to see Mr. Jennings.

I by no means, as you perceive, despaired of Mr. Jennings's case. He had himself remembered and applied, though quite in a mistaken way, the principle which I lay down in my Metaphysical Medicine, and which governs all such cases. I was about to apply it in earnest. I was profoundly interested, and very anxious to see and examine him while the "enemy" was actually present.

I drove up to the sombre house, and ran up the steps, and knocked. The door, in a little time, was opened by a tall woman in black silk. She looked ill, and as if she had been crying. She curtseyed, and heard my question, but she did not answer. She turned her face away, extending her hand hurriedly towards two men who were coming down-stairs; and thus having, as it were, tacitly made me over to them, she passed through a side-door hastily and shut it.

The man who was nearest the hall, I at once accosted, but being now close to him, I was shocked to see that both his hands were covered with blood.

I drew back a little, and the man passing down-stairs merely said in a low tone, "Here's the servant, sir."

The servant had stopped on the stairs, confounded and dumb at seeing me. He was rubbing his hands in a handkerchief, and it was steeped in blood.

"Jones, what is it, what has happened?" I asked, while a sickening suspicion overpowered me.

The man asked me to come up to the lobby. I was beside him in a moment, and frowning and pallid, with contracted eyes, he told me the horror which I already half guessed.

His master had made away with himself.

I went up-stairs with him to the room—what I saw there I won't tell you. He had cut his throat with his razor. It was a frightful gash. The two men had laid him upon the bed and composed his limbs. It had happened, as the immense pool of blood on the floor declared, at some distance between the bed and the window. There was carpet round his bed, and a carpet under his dressing-table, but none on the rest of the floor, for the man said he did not like carpet on his bedroom. In this sombre, and now terrible room, one of the great elms that darkened the house was slowly moving the shadow of one of its great boughs upon this dreadful floor.

I beckoned to the servant and we went down-stairs together. I turned, off the hall, into an old-fashioned panelled room, and there standing, I heard all the servant had to tell. It was not a great deal.

"I concluded, sir, from your words, and looks, sir, as you left last night, that you thought my master seriously ill. I thought it might be that you were afraid of a fit, or something. So I attended very close to your directions. He sat up late, till past three o'clock. He was not writing or reading. He was talking a great deal to himself, but that was nothing unusual. At about that hour I assisted him to undress, and left him in his slippers and dressing-gown. I went back softly in about half an hour. He was in his bed, quite undressed, and a pair of candles lighted on the table beside his bed. He was leaning on his elbow and looking out at the other side of the bed when I came in. I asked him if he wanted anything, and he said no.

"I don't know whether it was what you said to me, sir, or something a little unusual about him, but I was uneasy, uncommon uneasy, about him last night.

"In another half hour, or it might be a little more, I went up again. I did not hear him talking as before. I opened the door a little. The candles were both out, which was not usual. I had a bedroom candle, and I let the light in, a little bit, looking softly round. I saw him sitting in that chair beside the dressing-table with his clothes on again. He turned round and looked at me. I thought it strange he should get up and dress, and put out the candles to sit in the dark, that way. But I only asked him again if I could do anything for him. He said, no, rather sharp, I thought. I asked if I might light the candles, and he said, 'Do as you like, Jones.' So I lighted them, and I lingered a little about the room, and he said, 'Tell me truth, Jones, why did you come again—you did not hear any one cursing?' 'No, sir,' I said, wondering what he could mean.

"'No,' said he, after me, 'of course, no;' and I said to him, 'Wouldn't it be well, sir, you went to bed? It's just five o'clock;' and he said nothing but, 'Very likely: good-night, Jones.' So I went, sir, but in less than an hour I came again. The door was fast, and he heard me, and called as I thought from the bed to know what I wanted, and he desired me not to disturb him again. I lay down and slept for a little. It must have been between six and seven when I went up again. The door was still fast, and he made no answer, so I did not like to disturb him, and thinking he was asleep, I left him till nine. It was his custom to ring when he wished me to come, and I had no particular hour for calling him. I tapped very gently, and getting no answer, I stayed away a good while, supposing he was getting some rest then. It was not till eleven o'clock I grew really uncomfortable about him—for at the latest he was never, that I could remember, later than half-past ten. I got no answer. I knocked and called, and still no answer. So not being able to force the door, I called Thomas from the stables, and together we forced it, and found him in the shocking way you saw."

Jones had no more to tell. Poor Mr. Jennings was very gentle, and very kind. All his people were fond of him. I could see that the servant was very much moved.

So, dejected and agitated, I passed from that terrible house, and its dark canopy of elms, and I hope I shall never see it more. While I write to you I feel like a man who has but half waked from a frightful and monotonous dream. My memory rejects the picture with incredulity and horror. Yet I know it is true. It is the story of the process of a poison, a poison which excites the reciprocal action of spirit and nerve, and paralyses the tissue that separates those cognate functions of the senses, the external and the interior. Thus we find strange bed-fellows, and the mortal and immortal prematurely make acquaintance.

CONCLUSION. A WORD FOR THOSE WHO SUFFER.

My dear Van L., you have suffered from an affection similar to that which I have just described. You twice complained of a return of it.

Who, under God, cured you? Your humble servant, Martin Hesselius. Let me rather adopt the more emphasised piety of a certain good old French surgeon of three hundred years ago: "I treated, and God cured you."

Come, my friend, you are not to be hippish. Let me tell you a fact.

I have met with, and treated, as my book shows, fifty-seven cases of this kind of vision, which I term indifferently "sublimated," "precocious," and "interior."

There is another class of affections which are truly termed—though commonly confounded with those which I describe—spectral illusions. These latter I look upon as being no less simply curable than a cold in the head or a trifling dyspepsia.

It is those which rank in the first category that test our promptitude of thought. Fifty-seven such cases have I encountered, neither more nor less. And in how many of these have I failed? In no one single instance.

There is no one affliction of mortality more easily and certainly reducible, with a little patience, and a rational confidence in the physician. With these simple conditions, I look upon the cure as absolutely certain.

You are to remember that I had not even commenced to treat Mr. Jennings's case. I have not any doubt that I should have cured him perfectly in eighteen months, or possibly it might have extended to two years. Some cases are very rapidly curable, others extremely tedious. Every intelligent physician who will give thought and diligence to the task, will effect a cure.

You know my tract on The Cardinal Functions of the Brain. I there, by the evidence of innumerable facts, prove, as I think, the high probability of a circulation arterial and venous in its mechanism, through the nerves. Of this system, thus considered, the brain is the heart. The fluid, which is propagated hence through one class of nerves, returns in an altered state through another, and the nature of that fluid is spiritual, though not immaterial, any more than, as I before remarked, light or electricity are so.

By various abuses, among which the habitual use of such agents as green tea is one, this fluid may be affected as to its quality, but it is more frequently disturbed as to equilibrium. This fluid being that which we have in common with spirits, a congestion found upon the masses of brain or nerve, connected with the interior sense, forms a surface unduly exposed, on which disembodied spirits may operate: communication is thus more or less effectually established. Between this brain circulation and the heart circulation there is an intimate sympathy. The seat, or rather the instrument of exterior vision, is the eye. The seat of interior vision is the nervous tissue and brain, immediately about and above the eyebrow. You remember how effectually I dissipated your pictures by the simple application of iced eau-de-cologne. Few cases, however, can be treated exactly alike with anything like rapid success. Cold acts powerfully as a repellant of the nervous fluid. Long enough continued it will even produce that permanent insensibility which we call numbness, and a little longer, muscular as well as sensational paralysis.

I have not, I repeat, the slightest doubt that I should have first dimmed and ultimately sealed that inner eye which Mr. Jennings had inadvertently opened. The same senses are opened in delirium tremens, and entirely shut up again when the overaction of the cerebral heart, and the prodigious nervous congestions that attend it, are terminated by a decided change in the state of the body. It is by acting steadily upon the body, by a simple process, that this result is produced—and inevitably produced—I have never yet failed.

Poor Mr. Jennings made away with himself. But that catastrophe was the result of a totally different malady, which, as it were, projected itself upon that disease which was established. His case was in the distinctive manner a complication, and the complaint under which he really succumbed, was hereditary suicidal mania. Poor Mr. Jennings I cannot call a patient of mine, for I had not even begun to treat his case, and he had not yet given me, I am convinced, his full and unreserved confidence. If the patient do not array himself on the side of the disease, his cure is certain.

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THE LEGEND OF DUNBLANE.

IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

"It was in the year 1793," said my uncle, "that I made the acquaintance of William Dunblane, afterwards Lord Dunblane, at the University of St. Andrews. His bachelor uncle, the then lord, was not a very rich man, and he was a stingy one. William's father, too, was still alive, so that the young man was somewhat straitened as to money. We were just of an age, and my father was very liberal to me. Our relative positions, therefore, were more equal at that time than they afterwards became; and, in spite of the great difference of rank, Dunblane singled me out to be his favourite companion. I cannot say why this was, unless it may have been that I was a more patient listener than many other young fellows, to his long stories about his ancestry, and that while I always endeavoured to tell him the truth, I was more indulgent to this weakness of family pride than the rest were. They used to laugh at him, at first; but that, he soon showed them, he would never stand. He was very strong, and very passionate; and his face at such moments became as that of one possessed with a devil."

It was in these words that my uncle, Mr. Carthews, senior partner in the firm of Carthews and Bontor, of Aberdeen and Calcutta, used generally to begin the following strange narrative. Like many Scotchmen of his day, he had a somewhat inordinate reverence for rank; but it was balanced, in his case, by a business-like appreciation of the value of money. What is of more import, however, to the matter in hand, was his strict and fearless adherence to truth, joined to an extremely kind nature. These characteristics were conspicuous in every transaction of a long life. He was a shrewd, upright man, universally respected in the city where he passed the best part of his life: "stiff in opinions," occasionally prolix, but of a sound, clear judgment, and unimpeached honesty. In the narrative, therefore, which I shall try to give, as far as possible, in my uncle's own words, there is, I am confident, no wilful misrepresentation, no jot or tittle added to the facts, as he believed them to be. And his opinion of those facts, I take it, was formed very deliberately. I heard him tell the story repeatedly, yet it never varied in the smallest particular; and I know it invariably impressed his hearers with a sense of horrible reality. Imagine that the ladies have left the room; three or four men are seated round the polished mahogany; my uncle, a white-haired, keen-eyed man of seventy, bids us draw our chairs nearer the fire, and, passing round a magnum of his fine old port, he thus continues the story, of which I have given the opening words, with that incisive Scotch accent, and in that measured phrase, which seems to weigh each word in the balance, and reject it if found wanting.

Dunblane was an unpopular man. Men could not make him out. His manner was often disagreeable, and he was subject to moody fits, when he would speak to no one. He was capable of kind and generous acts, but implacable in his dislikes; and he never forgot an injury. I could manage him better than any one, and he would generally stand the truth from me; but his rage was a terrible thing to witness. I have never seen anything like it. Men used to say, "Keep clear of Dunblane when the fit is on him; he will stick at nothing."

The French Revolution was then at its height. Dunblane was a hot royalist, and used to be thrown into fresh transports of fury with the news of every act subversive of the king's authority. One night a man, in my room, who professed Republican sentiments, defended the conduct of the Assembly in imprisoning the royal family. Dunblane got up and flung a bottle at his head. There was a fine row, and it was arranged that the two men must fight the next morning. I secretly gave notice to the authorities, however, who interfered, and some sort of peace was patched up; but Dunblane never spoke to his antagonist again as long as he was in the university. I mention this, as I happen to recal the circumstance, just to give you an idea of the man's violence, and of the depth of his resentment.

I can remember, too, a conversation we had one day about marriage. He had been complaining of his poverty, but said that, nevertheless, he meant to marry early.

"You see, it is necessary that I should have an heir, lest the direct line become extinct. There is no one, after me."

"Do nothing in a hurry," I replied. "It would be a great misfortune, no doubt, that the title and estates should pass away to another branch of the family, but it would be a still greater one to have your whole life embittered by an unhappy marriage. You are young; you have life before you. Be quite sure it is for your happiness, ere you take such a step as this."

His reply was very characteristic.

"Oh," he said, "it is all very well for you to talk, who have plenty of money, and have no great name as an inheritance. We trace back our descent for six hundred years; it is a duty we owe to the country to keep up the family. If I was fortunate enough to be in your position, I should please myself. But, as it is, everything else is of secondary importance. My lord is always telling me so, and I suppose he is right. I must marry a woman with money, and I must have an heir. You don't know," he added, with the black look gathering on his brow, "*how* essential this is."

I assured him that I fully recognised the obligations which a great name and title entail, but that I could not think that to contract a hasty, ill-considered marriage could ever answer in the long run.

"Ah!" he said. "Then you have never heard the old prophecy in the family:

When five Dunblanes have had no son,
Then shall the line direct be run.

My uncle is the *fourth* lord who has had no son. If he should survive my father, and that I should succeed him, I shall be the *fifth.* You see now how necessary it is I should marry early."

"On account of a foolish distich!" I replied. His superstition almost amounted to an insanity; and I never would give in to it, though I confess that I have known more curious cases of such prophecies being fulfilled than any sceptical Englishman would believe. However, that has nothing to say to the matter in hand. Dunblane repeatedly referred to this prediction, which had evidently taken a hold upon his mind, not to be shaken by any words of mine. He would brood for hours over this and similar subjects. And among them, I have little doubt was one to which he never referred at that time, seeing that I treated his superstitions with unbecoming levity—a subject of which I had no knowledge for many years afterwards, but which was destined to have a fatal influence on his life.

In '96 I left college, and was sent out to our branch house in Calcutta. I heard the following year of Dunblane's marriage to a Miss Cameron, an orphan of good family, though not noble, said to possess both wealth and beauty; and I heard no more. He never wrote to me, nor did I expect it. Our lines of life were now quite different, and though I knew that he would always retain a friendly recollection of me, correspondence was another matter. I was a man of business, and engrossed in affairs in which he could take no interest; while I, on the other hand, knew nothing of the persons and the circumstances by which he was surrounded. I shall always regret that he did *not* write to me during those years; though probably no written words of mine could have been of any avail in arresting him: but I have occasionally found, in life, that the truth, though discarded at the time, will come back at some unexpected moment and give the devil the lie. Now the devil had it all his own way with Dunblane for years. His father, to whom I think he was really attached, was dead; his uncle, whom he disliked and feared, would not die. The uncle, I am told, proposed this marriage to him, and though Dunblane was indifferent—or more than indifferent—to the lady, he consented to marry her. This was the fatal error which nothing could retrieve. It was the first step down-hill, after which the descent became more and more rapid every year.

In 1803 Lord Dunblane did, at last, die, and, a few months later, my own father's death recalled me to Aberdeen, where I took his place as head of the house. One day, about a year after my return, George Pilson (you remember Pilson and Pilson, the attorneys? very respectable firm) was in my office, and chanced to speak of Dunblane Castle, where he had lately been. His father, I found out, was Lord Dunblane's man of business; and I questioned George as to his lordship's present condition and mode of life. His answer was far from satisfactory.

"His lordship's strangeness, and his violent ebullitions of temper have increased very much upon him of late," he said. "It is supposed that this is greatly owing to the fact that after nearly eight years of marriage there is no heir to the title. Then his wife is a person singularly unsuited to him in all ways. Her ladyship is handsome, but wanting in common-sense, garrulous in the extreme, laughing immoderately in and out of season, and, if I may be allowed to express an opinion on such a point, deficient in the dignity befitting her station. These things are perpetual blisters, I fancy, to his lordship. Her ladyship, in a word, is what may be called a 'provoking woman,' and as his lordship is not the most patient of men you may guess the consequences."

I replied that I was more sorry than surprised: from what I knew of Lord Dunblane I never expected that such a marriage—one purely of interest—could turn out well. "And yet," I added, "if he had fallen into other hands, I think he might have become a very different man. There were germs of good in him."

At this George Pilson remained silent for a few moments, a silence which I thought most eloquent. He then proceeded to speak of the castle, which he described as one of the finest monuments of the fifteenth century remaining in the country.

"His lordship is very justly proud of it," he said, "though with his pride is mingled a certain superstitious awe, as, no doubt, you know? I dare say he has often spoken to you of the secret room in the castle?"

"No," I replied, "I do not remember that he ever did. What is there special about this room?"

He replied, "No one knows exactly where it is except the owner, the heir, and one other person; who happens, at present, to be my father. The family superstition concerning this room is very strong, and I believe they shrink from speaking of it."

"But what does it arise from?" I inquired.

He said, "The legend runs that some

former Lord of Dunblane sold himself to the devil in this room; the plain English of which is, I imagine, that he committed some foul crime there. At all events, this room has remained shut up for centuries; and it was predicted by one of those sibyls, who were given to such utterances, that, if ever the secret were made known the ruin of the house would follow."

"Why," I exclaimed, "this is the second prophecy that has been made about the Dunblanes! One pays dearly for belonging to these great families if one is to be subject to all these superstitions. Do you know if the room is ever opened?"

"Yes, I believe so, once a year; when, if possible, the three who are in possession of the secret meet here. My father never speaks on the subject, of course, nor does Lord Dunblane."

I asked who the heir-at-law was. He told me they had had difficulty in finding him out. He was in some office in London, and in very poor circumstances, being descended from a younger branch of the Dunblanes, who had gone to settle in England in the beginning of the last century.

After some further conversation, Pilson took his leave, and I thought very little more about Lord Dunblane and his affairs, having concerns of my own which fully occupied my thoughts at that time.

Some weeks later I received, to my surprise, a letter from Lord Dunblane, saying that he had just heard from his man of business, Mr. Pilson, that I was returned from India, and living in Aberdeen; and that it would give him great pleasure to see me again, if I would pay him a visit at Dunblane Castle. He named a day when he was expecting a party; but added that if this time was not convenient to me, I could write myself, and propose some later date. It would have been ungracious to have refused such an invitation. Indeed, I was fully sensible of the honour, though I anticipated but little pleasure from this visit, under the present circumstances. A press of business retained me in Aberdeen just then, but I promised to write, and I did write, some weeks later, to his lordship, proposing to accompany Mr. Pilson, who informed me that he was going to Dunblane Castle: for I reflected that as the stage would take me no further than Nairn, we could share a post-chaise together, which would lighten the cost of a journey, in which business had no part. His lordship replied, in a few lines, to say I should be welcome; and accordingly, on the tenth of April, 1804, Pilson and I left Aberdeen by the stage, which started at six A.M., and reached Dunblane Castle late that afternoon. It was getting dusk as we drove up to this magnificent remnant of the feudal age—a pile which impressed one with a sense of the power which must have belonged to the Dunblanes in past ages, and heightened their claim to consideration, in my eyes at least, more than the finest modern palace could have done. It was the grandest specimen of this style of architecture I ever saw, of vast extent, its sky-outline bristling with pointed turrets, its grey walls crowning a steep height covered with venerable Scotch firs, a dry moat surrounding it, and a gateway leading into a courtyard, which occupied nearly an acre, and round which the castle was built.

Lord Dunblane met us in the hall. The nine years which had elapsed since we had parted had wrought changes in us both, no doubt; but in the man I saw before me I should scarcely have recognised my fellow-student had I met him in the streets of Aberdeen. He was grown very large, and on his face, which was lined far beyond his years, the hard, wild look which had been transient formerly, had settled down, apparently, into its habitual expression. He received me kindly, but there was no smile, as he shook my hand. The light had died out of the face, never to be rekindled. He told me I should have but a dull visit, he feared. "Had you come six weeks ago when I wanted you, you would have met a country gathering: not that *I* like that sort of thing: I hate it; but you and I were always very different, Carthews. Now you will find no one; and I have a good deal of business with Mr. Pilson, so that I must leave Lady Dunblane to entertain you." I assured him that I should be perfectly happy, exploring the beauties of the park and adjoining forest, and begged him not to consider me for a moment. After that he led me up-stairs to the drawing-room, where Lady Dunblane was seated alone.

The first impression produced on every one by her ladyship's beauty could not but be favourable. She was a brunette; tall, with lively eyes and brilliant teeth, which she showed a great deal when she laughed, and dark brown hair, cut short and dishevelled in loose waves over her head. Upon this occasion, however, I saw nothing but a curl or two; for she wore a species of helmet, much affected, as I afterwards learnt, by women of condition, in that day, whose husbands commanded regiments of yeomanry, as did Lord Dunblane. Being the first head-gear of the kind which I had seen, its singularity struck me; but her ladyship carried this curious erection of buckram, fur, and tinsel, with a grace which forbade a thought of ridicule. Her beautiful figure was set off by a spenser of scarlet cloth, and a tight-fitting skirt of some white material which appeared to have been damped, it clung so close to her person. It was evident that her ladyship was not neglectful of her appearance, nor unmindful of the impression she made upon even a humble individual like myself. She came forward and greeted me with infinite suavity, saying:

"It is amiable of you, Mr. Carthews, to come and take pity on our solitude. We see no one from one week's end to another in this castle of Otranto (you have read Mr. Walpole's romance?), where all is so gloomy and mysterious that, as I tell my lord, I am really alarmed sometimes at the sound of my own voice!"

"I wish that occurred rather oftener," muttered his lordship. She continued, laughing, "Our only society are the ghosts. You don't mind them, I hope? They are all of the oldest families, for we are mighty select here, you must know. If they visit you, you must esteem it a great honour, Mr. Carthews."

I replied in the same strain, that I felt myself to be wholly unworthy of that honour; but that, if they came, I would try and receive them with becoming courtesy.

"Like my parrot," cried her ladyship, laughing. "He and my spaniel sleep in my room; and sometimes, in the dead of night, he calls out, 'Pray, come in, and take a chair!' which startles me from my sleep, and frightens me out of my senses!"

His lordship said something about her having no senses to be frightened out of, I believe, and something about "brutes." She caught up the word, with a laugh.

"Brutes? Oh, yes; one gets accustomed to the society of brutes of *any* sort, when one has nothing else all day."

Such amenities passed between the two were of constant occurrence, I suppose, for they produced little effect beyond deepening the scowl on his lordship's face. As to me, I felt very uncomfortable, and the charm of Lady Dunblane's beauty had already melted away. Though not a stupid woman, I saw she was a very foolish one. How she dared to aggravate a man of such a temperament as her husband's amazed me. It was just like a child handling fire. She rattled away and laughed all that evening with little intermission. Lord Dunblane scarcely opened his lips. Over the wine Pilson and I talked; but his lordship stared moodily at the fire, and said nothing. I began to think I had made a mistake in coming all the way from Aberdeen for this. To play the part of chorus to a matrimonial duet of the most discordant character was not pleasant; and if my former friend was so self-absorbed as to be unable to speak to me, the sooner I left him the better. I suppose something of this sort struck him, for he said, as he wished me good night, "You must not mind my silence and absence of mind, Carthews. I am very glad to see you here; but my present position gives me many anxieties. I am irritated and worried until, by Heaven! I feel at times as if I should go mad."

Well, I went to bed, and slept soundly. I never was an imaginative man, you see, or the room I was in might have conjured up some of those spiritual visitants her ladyship had joked about, evidently to her lord's annoyance. Not that it was any worse than the other rooms in the castle. I take it they were all oak-panelled, with hideous family portraits grinning from the wall upon the occupants of the vast draperied beds, in one of which I slept without waking, until the servant brought in my hot water for shaving. It was a bright morning, and at breakfast I found my host in better spirits than he had seemed the previous evening. I could not help speculating whether this could be in consequence of Lady Dunblane's absence. She never came down to breakfast, I found. Her maid, a most formidable-looking female, with red hair, and the muscles of a gillie, came in, I remember, with a tray, and took her ladyship's chocolate up to her. This person, I was afterwards told, had been born on the estate, and was devoted to Dunblane. She had been ill spoken of as a girl; but Dunblane's mother had befriended and made this Elspie her body servant, and Dunblane had insisted, when he married, on her filling the same office to his wife, much to that lady's annoyance, who wished for a modish waiting-woman from Edinburgh or London. So much for this ill-favoured specimen of her sex, to whom I never spoke in my life, but who impressed me very unfavourably whenever I saw her. After breakfast his lordship took me over the castle, and gave me all the historical associations connected with it, showing me, with great pride, the bed in which Queen Mary had slept, a yew tree, said to have been planted by Robert

Bruce, and the suit of armour borne by Dunblane of Dunblane at the battle of Bannockburn. He dilated on the glories of his house with more animation than I had yet observed: then suddenly the cloud came over him. "And to think," he said, "that all this must pass into another line—into hands that have been debased by trade" (which was not polite to me; but he entirely forgot my presence for the moment, I am sure); "to think that people who have hardly a drop of old blood in their veins, who have intermarried for generations with Smiths and Browns, and plebeian names of that kind, should come to inherit *this*, which they have no feeling for, no pride in—by G—d, it is enough to wring one's heart!"

And this was the way he went on, from time to time, bursting out in imprecations on his fate in having no heir, and upon the evil star which had risen over his house. It was in vain that I pointed out that he was young still, and in good health, and must not abandon hope. He shook his head gloomily. "The prophecy is against me: it is no use.

When five Dunblanes have had no son,
Then shall the line direct be run.

It is clear enough, is it not? I am doomed. I should have known it. When did such a prophecy ever come wrong? What a cursed fool I was to marry!"

So I thought; to marry, that is to say, as he had done; but I abstained from saying so. By-and-by his lordship took Mr. Pilson to his study, where they were engaged for some hours over business; and I was left alone to ramble about the castle, inside and out, as I would.

Remembering the story I had heard of a secret room, I counted all the windows outside, and then, returning to the castle, traversed every passage, mounted every turret, and opened every door I could, to see if the number of windows corresponded. With the help of the serving man whom I met on the stairs, and who knew all the rooms in the castle, he said, I accounted for each window satisfactorily. And after two hours' diligent endeavour to solve this mystery, I arrived at the conclusion that there could be no room—it was all humbug. I was at a time of life, you see, when over-confidence in one's own powers is apt to lead one to very false conclusions.

At luncheon Lady Dunblane appeared, and an incident, which left a painful impression on my mind, took place on that occasion. Dunblane had a peculiar aversion to her ladyship's spaniel. Strict orders were given that he was to be confined to her ladyship's own suite of rooms, and on no account to be allowed beyond them. But some door had inadvertently been left open, and, while we were at luncheon, the spaniel ran barking into the room, round and round the table, and finally straight between his lordship's legs, who was at that moment smarting under one of his wife's sallies. He roared out in a voice of thunder:

"How often have I told you, ma'am, to keep that infernal little beast in your own room?" and he kicked out so viciously, that he sent the poor animal spinning along the oak floor to the further end of the room, where he lay howling. His mistress ran up, and seized him in her arms; the creature's leg was broken. Her ladyship shrieked, and stamped, and my lord swore; and, thoroughly sickened with the whole scene, I rose and left the room. Pilson joined me in the hall.

"What is to be the end of all this?" I said to him.

His answer was, "I am afraid to think."

"Lord Dunblane," I said, "seems to me to be losing all self-restraint. If he goes on thus, what will become of him?"

Pilson looked round him, then leaned forward and whispered, "He will end his days in a madhouse." Dunblane shut himself into his room for the rest of the afternoon. By-and-by her ladyship drove out in her coach and four, and carried her dog in her arms to a veterinary surgeon some miles off. At dinner she appeared in as brilliant spirits as ever. How much of this was real I cannot say; nor, supposing her hilarity to be assumed, whether it was done for the purpose of aggravating her lord. It certainly succeeded, if so. His moroseness was enlivened by several ferocious sallies. The conversation turned upon France, I remember, and on the probabilities of the First Consul's being made emperor, a subject that engrossed all minds just then.

"How I admire that little man!" exclaimed her ladyship. "How much greater to found a dynasty, as he is doing, than to inherit all the crowns in Europe! I begin to wish I was a Frenchwoman!"

"I begin to wish you were!" cried my lord. "There is not another British peeress who would disgrace herself by uttering such a sentiment."

She laughed aloud, and replied, "Oh! because they are less frank than I am. All women admire Le Petit Caporal in their hearts. What fun it will be if he comes over here, and conquers us! It will be much nicer being the subjects of a great hero, instead of the subjects of a mad old king who ——"

"Hold your tongue, ma'am!" shouted Dunblane, bringing his fist down upon the table with a force which made the glasses clatter: "or, if you will talk your low treasonous rubbish, go and talk it in the kitchen. You shall *not* talk it here!"

She only laughed in reply. She certainly seemed to take a delight in provoking him; and, as she knew his sensitive points, this was not difficult. I found an opportunity, over a game of cribbage, later in the evening, of asking her why she acted thus. No doubt this was somewhat of a liberty, considering our short acquaintance; but I felt I could not remain longer in the house without trying to amend matters.

"Oh!" she said, "anything for a little excitement in this horridly monotonous life. I should die of ennui if it wasn't for the tiffs with my lord."

I told her she did not know what harm she was doing; and I asked if she never felt afraid of irritating a man so passionate as his lordship.

"Bless you, no," was her reply. "It is he who is afraid, *really*, of me — of my tongue, you see. Ha, ha! No one ever answered him before; his mother, his servants, his friends, why,—you yourself, I daresay, you never contradicted him? Now, I *always* do, and I always say just what I like. He hates me, of course, but he is afraid of me, Mr. Carthews. Ha, ha, ha!"

Good heavens! I thought to myself, and these two people are tied to each other for life. Both have a fair chance of living for the next forty years. What a prospect! Even before we separated for the night she had stung him with another of her irritating speeches. There had been some talk of the steward's boy, who had tumbled from a tree, and had broken his leg. . . . "Children are a horrid bore," said Lady Dunblane. "Thank Heaven, I have no brat to be tumbling from trees, and worrying one's life out."

I dare say she did not mean it. It is hardly possible that, under the circumstances, she should not have wished for a child. The devil was in the woman, constantly prompting something to aggravate her husband. His back was towards me, on this occasion, and he said nothing, so I could only judge of the effect produced upon him by his instantly lighting a chamber candlestick and leaving the room. We saw him no more that night.

The next day and the day following only further developed the hopeless condition of affairs between Lord and Lady Dunblane. I tried once to speak to him on the subject, but I found it was in vain. An ineradicable hatred of his wife had grown up in him, which he did not attempt to conceal. When alone with him, he would occasionally converse; in her presence he seemed to be perpetually on the look-out for what might drop from her irrepressible tongue. The fourth day of my stay at the castle—the day before I was obliged to return to Aberdeen—arrived, and with it came a guest, who, although expected, was evidently anything but welcome. This was Mr. James Dunblane, the heir-at-law, who had only lately been traced, and between whom and Lord Dunblane certain communications had passed by letter. This was his first visit to the castle—a visit which, as I afterwards learnt, was a matter almost of necessity. He seemed to feel the awkwardness of his position. I do not remember much about the young man, except that he was plain in person, and very quiet. Lord Dunblane received him coldly, but politely. Lady Dunblane, after the usual fashion, plunged at once into the subject of all others his lordship shrunk from any notice of.

"So you are come, as heir-at-law, to be let into the secret of this famous room, are you? Why, it is as bad as being made a freemason! . . . . Can you keep a secret, Mr. Dunblane? because, if not, untold misfortunes are to befall us." And the laugh with which she concluded sounded to me like the screech of an owl forboding evil. Lord Dunblane looked as if he could have stabbed her, but he only muttered an oath under his breath, and clenched his fist—a movement which no one saw but myself. Every incident of that evening is fresh in my recollection. I remember how she returned again and again to that subject, as though it had a fatal fascination for her, but more likely, I fear, because she saw that her husband writhed under it. She ridiculed the prophecy, and laughed at all those superstitions, which his lordship cherished as his religion. It was distressing to watch him the while. He was far quieter than usual, scarcely spoke, but sat, his arms crossed, staring at the fire, with eyes which burnt, themselves, like coals, and when he swore, which he did once or twice, it was in a suppressed voice, contrasting strangely with his usual violence. But there was a vibration in the tone which showed how strongly he was stirred. At last, it was late in the evening, and we were sitting round her ladyship's tea-table, when she committed her crowning act of folly by offering to lay a wager with any one that she would find out the secret room herself. I need hardly say no one accepted the challenge. But she was not to be discouraged. She had seen her husband's face go white, and the look which he had shot at her gave a zest to her audacious scheme. She repeated her declaration that she would penetrate this wonderful mystery. Such things were well enough to frighten old women with in the middle ages, but how any one could believe in predictions and other rubbish of this kind in the present day passed her comprehension. For her part she had no faith in anything of the kind, and to prove what folly it was, she should leave no stone unturned to discover this room about which such a fuss was made: after which the secret, she declared, should remain one no longer. I tried to stop her; Pilson tried to stop her: it was all no use. She had got the bit between her teeth, so to speak, and away she went, partly to show off, and partly out of spite, regardless what she said, provided it produced an effect and inflamed my lord yet more. She pictured, laughingly, the cobwebbed condition of the room, and how she would turn in the housemaid with broom and duster; after which she would give an evening party there, and invite all the ghosts to come, if they chose—"indeed the black gentleman himself!" . . . . Poor woman, she little knew what she was invoking. No one laughed. Even the heir, who, being shy, always smiled when required, looked too stupefied to comply with the demand on this occasion. To glance at Lord Dunblane's face was enough to check any inclination to hilarity. I have never forgotten its expression. I had witnessed his ungovernable passion scores of times, prompting him to sudden acts of violence. But now, there was a certain admixture of *fear* (she had divined rightly, I saw, when she said he was afraid of her) with the rage which trembled through his whole frame, the like of which I have never beheld but once since in my life. I saw a beast-tamer enter the hyenas' den at the show last year. The aspect of their malignant fury cowed by terror, but watching for its opportunity to burst forth, the savage hissing wherewith they received the lash and showed their fangs, recalled to me Dunblane's demeanour as he listened to his wife. . . . . At last, I could stand it no longer, and made up my mind to tell a lie.

"Lady Dunblane," I said, "like most Scotchmen, I am a trifle superstitious. This is my last night under your hospitable roof, and I am sure you would not willingly disturb its rest. You are so happily constituted as to be above fear of *any kind*. Others are weaker. Let me earnestly advise you to leave all the superstitions connected with Dunblane Castle alone. Believe me, 'there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your ladyship's philosophy.'"

She burst out a-laughing, as usual. "Oh, Mr. Carthews, I'm ashamed of you. But I see what it is. You are afraid, not of the ghosts and the predictions, but of my lord. Well, I shall see you in May, when I pass through Aberdeen on my way south, and I shall tell you all about it then; for, depend upon it, I shall have found out the secret by that time."

And so, in the insolence of youth and high spirits and an indomitable will, she bade me good-night, poor woman, and I never saw her again.

Dunblane had left the room. Whether it was pre-arranged that Pilson and the young heir were to join him in his study, and that later in the night the door of the secret room should be unclosed, I know not. I am inclined, from one or two circumstances, to think that it was so; but, again, there are other things which have made me doubt it. At all events, when we three bade each other good-night, neither Pilson nor young Dunblane dropped anything which should lead me to suppose they were not going straight to their own rooms. They were not to leave the castle till the day after me. It was quite possible, therefore, that the chamber was to be unlocked after my departure.

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THE LEGEND OF DUNBLANE.

IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER II.

I SLEPT soundly during the first part of the night. But about three o'clock I woke suddenly—I might almost say, I started from my sleep. I had not been dreaming; I was not conscious of having heard any noise; but my sleep, somehow or other, was broken suddenly, and I sat up in my bed with a sense of undefined alarm. I listened:

all was still: the soughing of the wind among the Scotch firs below the rampart-wall was the only thing I heard. But, feeling restless, I jumped out of bed, went to the window and opened it. There was no moon, but it was a light night. I could distinguish the ivy on the wall beneath; the little door in the angle of the turret opposite, and the dusky forms of the owls that flew past the window. Almost immediately beneath it was a curious old well said to be of wonderful depth, but long since unused. If one dropped a stone in there an interval which seemed like half a minute elapsed before a faint splash told that it had reached the bottom.

I had been at the window a few minutes when the door in the turret opposite opened, with a slight grating sound which attracted my attention. A figure glided forth, and ran swiftly towards the well. I distinguished that it was a woman by the long drapery, and as she came under the window I could just make out that she carried some sort of vessel in her hand. Whatever it was she threw it in, and waited, leaning over the side, until she caught the distant thud of the object as it met the water. Then she returned rather more leisurely than she had come, the door was shut, and, though I waited at the window a full hour, I saw and heard no more.

I do not know that at any other place, at any other time, this circumstance would have aroused my curiosity. As it was, I could not get to sleep again for thinking of it, and speculating what could have been the motive that induced any female of the establishment to rise in the dead of night in order to cast something into the well.

I had to be stirring very early, and I was at my solitary breakfast when Lord Dunblane entered. He looked ghastly, so much so, that I could not help asking if he was ill. He turned fiercely round upon me, demanding why I asked.

"Because you look as if you had not slept," I said.

"And you? Pray how did *you* sleep?" he inquired, knitting his brows. "You were not disturbed? You had no nightmare after Lady Dunblane's conversation last night?"

I had resolved to say nothing of what I had seen, and replied that I had rested pretty well. I was then proceeding to express my thanks to him for his hospitality, when he interrupted me. "If you wish to show yourself a friend, say as little as possible about your visit here to any one. I am going abroad at once. I have made up my mind that Lady Dunblane can live here no longer. You have heard enough to know how she hates the place—and it disagrees with her, moreover. She has had several epileptic attacks—a severe one this very night; it is evident that the climate does not suit her, and I am recommended to take her to Italy. My lady and I can never agree here. She does all she can to goad me to madness—and perhaps she has succeeded: who can say? People will gossip, Carthews, when we are gone. Prove yourself a friend, and say nothing about our quarrels while you have been here."

I was a good deal surprised at the tenor of this speech, but thought it reasonable upon the whole. There was something in his eye, nevertheless, which disquieted me. Coupling it with Pilson's words, two days previously, and with my own observations, I could not avoid the conviction that the fate to which he himself had just now alluded was imminent. It might be warded off, perhaps, by change of scene, and the removal of the causes of irritation; but it was impossible to look at him steadily, and to doubt that incipient insanity was there. I begged him to act upon his determination of going abroad without loss of time; and then, shaking his hand, I stepped into the chaise, and drove off.

Well, I returned to Aberdeen; and some days after this Pilson called on me. I asked what news he brought of Lord and Lady Dunblane.

"They are gone abroad. I suppose it is the best thing he could do. Her ladyship had a succession of such severe fits that she was unable to leave her room, or to see any one but her maid after you left. I *did* see her once at the window, and her look quite alarmed me. His lordship was much calmer, but he scarcely spoke. His wife's sudden prostration, after all their violent bickerings, affected him a good deal. He is in a bad way, I think, Carthews. I mean that I am very much afraid"—and he pointed significantly to his head.

I told him that I fully shared his apprehensions, and then asked him more particularly to describe the change in Lady Dunblane's appearance.

"The morning I left I was walking round the rampart when I heard one of the windows rattle. I looked up, and there was Lady Dunblane, her head pressed against the panes, and with such a terrible expression of agony in her face as I shall never forget. She kept opening her mouth, and making the most hideous grimaces at me, so that it was clear that she was not quite in her right senses at the moment. She disappeared suddenly."

"Did you ever see any indication of a tendency to such a malady in her ladyship?" I asked.

"No. I cannot say I ever did," he replied.

"Was no doctor sent for?"

"Yes, the country apothecary came once."

"And what did he say? Did you speak to him?"

"Yes. I saw him in the hall as he was stepping into his buggy. I asked how he found her ladyship. He said she was much prostrated by the violence of the attack, but he seemed a puzzle-headed fellow. No doubt he was awed by the honour of being sent for to the castle; for I could not get much out of him. He seemed dazed; but muttered something about change being good for her ladyship."

"And who attended her during these attacks?" I inquired.

"No one but his lordship and the maid Elspie. My lord told me that his wife was very violent; but he would not suffer any of the men to be sent for, to hold her. He and Elspie, who is a very powerful woman, managed her between them. He said that he had found it necessary to tie her hands. I do not envy him his journey. They left in the family coach an hour after our departure, and were to travel night and day to Leith, where they took ship for Holland."

He then went on to say that the young heir-at-law had returned to London much depressed with his visit, and that the necessary formalities having now been gone through (which I understand to mean that the secret of the haunted room had been duly communicated to him), Mr. Dunblane would in all probability never see the castle again during my lord's lifetime.

I seldom saw Pilson for some time after this conversation; when I did, he told me what little he knew of the Dunblanes; but months often elapsed without his having any direct communication with my lord, and even then the letters he received were mere bald statements and inquiries, exclusively upon matters of business. These, however, were sufficient to show that his mind had not given way; they were lucid and perspicuous in every detail. There was never any mention of her ladyship, for the obvious reason, as it transpired after a while, that she and my lord were separated. He was travelling now in Italy, now in Hungary, now in the East, while she remained—no one knew exactly where—in Switzerland. At the end of the third year he returned to Dunblane, and shut himself up there, refusing to see any of the neighbours who called. In reply to every inquiry for her ladyship (more especially those which a distant cousin, her only relation, made about this time), he stated that her ladyship's health obliged her to remain on the Continent; her mind had been much weakened by continued epileptic attacks, and she was unequal to correspondence. He stated, further, that she was under excellent medical care, and that though, by reason of the excitement under which she sometimes laboured, it was not deemed advisable that he should visit her often, he made a point of doing so once a year. This statement seems to have been considered satisfactory. Lady Dunblane's friends—and she had very few—were not suspicious, and the world at large troubled itself but little with the domestic concerns of a couple who had lived in isolated grandeur, with rare exceptions, since his lordship's accession to the title. Pilson went twice to the castle, during that year, and, as far as I know, he was the only guest. He gave a gloomy picture of the solitary man shut up in that big place. We both avoided all mention of her ladyship's name; but I now know that he was no easier than I was on that head.

It was towards the close of 1808 that he called on me one morning, at an unusually early hour. His face, his whole manner, betokened that my grave, quiet friend was unusually perturbed. He looked round the room—this very room where we are sitting—drew his chair close to mine, and said in a whisper:

"Carthews, I have come to you in a very distressing emergency. I hardly know whether I am justified in taking this step, but I do know that I can depend on you, and you may materially help me in a most painful and difficult situation."

Without more ado, he then proceeded to say that a young Frenchmen, who gave his name as Jean Marcel, had called upon him the previous night, stating that he had lately come from Geneva, where he was in a wine merchant's office, and had been sent on business to Aberdeen. He was the bearer of a small crumpled note, addressed in nearly illegible characters, to M. Pilson, Attorney, Aberdeen. He stated that he had come by it thus. Shortly before leaving Geneva, it had been his duty to inspect the "recolte" of various vineyards: among them one belonging to the Château d'Osman some miles distant. The house itself was tenanted by an English lady, who was said to be mad or imbecile. At all events she was never heard to speak, and was closely watched by her attendants night and day. She walked on a terrace overlooking the vineyard, but it was never out of sight of a gaunt woman, who was, no doubt, her keeper. The intendant of the estate, who told Jean Marcel these particulars, walked through the vineyard with him, when they saw the unhappy lady on the terrace above. Her appearance had much interested Marcel. He described her as a handsome woman, but with a fixed, woe-begone expression of face, and wearing a black cloak, which entirely concealed her person. In the course of Marcel's inspection, they stood for some time just under the terrace wall, and he spoke to the intendant of his approaching voyage to Aberdeen. There was no doubt but that he was overheard by the lady on the terrace. She disappeared, but a quarter of an hour later, while they were still near the wall, the two men heard the sound of a running footstep upon the terrace, followed by a plaintive moaning, like that of a wounded bird. They looked up, and there she stood, glancing round with an expression of terror to see if she was followed, and of earnest supplication towards the two men beneath. She opened her mouth wide—a clear proof, the intendant seemed to think, of the poor creature's imbecility—then raised both arms up high, when, to his horror, he perceived that she had lost her right hand. With her left, she then suddenly dropped over the wall a paper with a stone inside, and had scarcely done this, when her gaunt attendant appeared upon the terrace. The poor lady's whole demeanour changed; the old fixed look returned, and she began once more, with slow uncertain steps, to pace the terrace. To gratify her, Marcel picked up the paper, and pocketed it, as he walked away. As soon as he was out of sight he examined it.

Outside was scrawled, "Pour l'amour de Dieu remettez cette lettre à son adresse." Within was the note addressed to Pilson. The intendant laughed at the affair, and tried to persuade Marcel to tear up the note. "All mad people imagine themselves to be sane, and this one no doubt wants to persuade her friends that she is unjustly confined; but you need only look at her to see that she is a lunatic."

Marcel admitted the probability of this, but he could not bring himself to destroy the paper. Whether she was mad or not, the condition of this maimed unhappy creature had aroused his compassion so deeply, that he declared the first thing he would do on arriving at Aberdeen would be to find out the person to whom this note was addressed. And he had done so.

When he had finished this strange narrative, Pilson laid before me a scrap of paper—evidently the blank page torn out of the end of a book—on which was scrawled:

"*Help! for God's sake, help! before they kill me. Oh, save me, Mr. Pilson, save me, as you hope to be saved hereafter.* E. DUNBLANE."

We looked at each other for some minutes without speaking. At last Pilson said:

"If I consulted my own interest, I should remain silent, or simply enclose these lines to his lordship. Her ladyship's condition, no doubt, justifies any steps that have been taken. I cannot suspect my lord; and if he discovers that I have interfered in his domestic concerns, he will certainly take the management of his affairs out of my hands. But, on the other hand, does not humanity call for some investigation into this? I could not die at peace, remembering that I had turned a deaf ear to such a cry; but I am puzzled what to do, Mr. Carthews. It has occurred to me that you may have business connexions with Geneva, and might, perhaps, make inquiries which would not compromise you as they would me."

In other words, Pilson was anxious to ease his conscience at as little risk to himself as might be. I did not blame him; my interest was too deeply stirred for me not to follow up the inquiry with the keenest avidity. But then, as Pilson had hinted, it is true that I had nothing to lose. I promised him that I would write that very day to a correspondent at Geneva, and desire him to leave no stone unturned towards discovering the truth.

I had to wait some weeks for the answer. The commission was one the execution of which was beset with difficulties. The village pasteur, the doctor, the intendant of the vineyards, and all the neighbours were applied to, but little additional information could be gathered. At last the maire of the district was induced to investigate the case, upon representations being made to him that there existed suspicions as to the treatment which the incarcerated lady—whether insane or only imbecile—met with. After a vigorous resistance they forced an entry into the château. The sight that met them was heart-rending. The poor creature lay dying upon her bed, and but for this intervention would have been denied the last consolations of religion. When the pasteur knelt down, however, and questioned her, she only shook her head and moaned. Then, with an effort, she opened her mouth wide, and, to their horror, they perceived that *she had no tongue.*

They implored her to write down the name of the perpetrator of this barbarous crime. But either she had no strength, or else she was praying, poor soul, for grace to forgive her persecutors, rather than for retribution. She listened devoutly to the good pasteur's prayers, and a glorious smile lighted up her tear-worn eyes as the death-film gathered over them. So the unhappy lady passed away. The woman Elspie was, of course, seized, and subjected to a rigorous cross-examination. She declared that the lady who was just dead had been thus mutilated by her husband one night when goaded into a state of insane rage by his wife's discovery of a secret, to which he attached a superstitious importance, and which she threatened to proclaim to all the world. In the struggle to defend herself, her right wrist was also severed. The woman maintained that her mistress had ever since been subject to violent fits of delirium, necessitating restraint. This I do not believe; there is no proof of it whatever. How far the rest of her story was true, it was impossible to say, and will never now be known. There were probabilities in favour of it; but, on the other hand, might not this wretch herself have been the instrument? I did not forget that I had seen her (as I have now no sort of doubt) on that fatal night stealing out to throw *something* into the well. Of her complicity, at all events, there was ample proof, since from the first she was the attendant upon her ill-fated mistress. But the hand of justice, for all that, was stayed.

The very same day that I received the letter containing the foregoing particulars, and while Pilson and I were deliberating what steps must now be taken, the news of an appalling catastrophe, which had happened thirty-six hours previously, reached us. Lord Dunblane had been burnt in his bed, and the greater part of the castle destroyed. How the fire originated was never known, but it broke out from his lordship's room in the dead of night, and three sides of the quadrangle were burnt to the ground before the flames could be got under. The lovers of coincidences tried afterwards to make out that Lord Dunblane and his wife died the same night; the superstitious even fabricated a theory that, struck with remorse, upon learning, by second sight, of his wife's death, he had himself fired the castle, and resolutely perished in the flames. But all this is purely imaginary. It is sufficiently remarkable that these deaths should have been so near one another; but Lady Dunblane died at least five days before her husband; and as to the supposition of his lordship's self-destruction, the only ground for it was his strange mental condition, which was no worse than it had been for the last four years.

The woman Elspie was set at large by the authorities at Geneva, no one coming forward as her accuser. Mr. Pilson thought, and I believe he was right, that now both Lord and Lady Dunblane were dead it was better this terrible story should not be made public. It oozed out, in the course of time, as almost all such scandals do, but not through me. It was only when I found that all sorts of false or garbled versions of the circumstances were current in society that I ever mentioned what I knew, and that was years afterwards, when, in default of heirs, the title of Dunblane had become extinct.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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THE CHILD THAT WENT WITH THE FAIRIES.

Eastward of the old city of Limerick, about ten Irish miles, under the range of mountains known as the Slieveelim hills, famous as having afforded Sarsfield a shelter among their rocks and hollows, when he crossed them in his gallant descent upon the cannon and ammunition of King William, on its way to the beleaguering army, there runs a very old and narrow road. It connects the Limerick road to Tipperary with the old road from Limerick to Dublin, and runs by bog and pasture, hill and hollow, straw-thatched village, and roofless castle, not far from twenty miles.

Skirting the heathy mountains of which I have spoken, at one part it becomes singularly lonely. For more than three Irish miles it traverses a deserted country. A wide, black bog, level as a lake, skirted with copse, spreads at the left, as you journey northward, and the long and irregular line of mountain rises at the right, clothed in heath, broken with lines of grey rock that resemble the bold and irregular outlines of fortifications, and riven with many a gully, expanding here and there into rocky and wooded glens, which open as they approach the road.

A scanty pasturage, on which browsed a few scattered sheep or kine, skirts this solitary road for some miles, and under shelter of a hillock, and of two or three great ash-trees, stood, not many years ago, the little thatched cabin of a widow named Mary Ryan.

Poor was this widow in a land of poverty. The thatch had acquired the grey tint and sunken outlines, that show how the alternations of rain and sun have told upon that perishable shelter.

But whatever other dangers threatened, there was one well provided against by the care of other times. Round the cabin stood half a dozen mountain ashes, as the rowans, inimical to witches, are there called. On the worn planks of the door were nailed two horse-shoes, and over the lintel and spreading along the thatch, grew, luxuriant, patches of that ancient cure for many maladies, and prophylactic against the machinations of the evil one, the house-leek. Descending into the doorway, in the chiar' oscuro of the interior, when your eye grew sufficiently accustomed to that dim light, you might discover, hanging at the head of the widow's wooden-roofed bed, her beads and a phial of holy water.

Here certainly were defences and bulwarks against the intrusion of that unearthly and evil power, of whose vicinity this solitary family were constantly reminded by the outline of Lisnavoura, that lonely hill-haunt of the "Good people," as the fairies are called euphemistically, whose strangely dome-like summit rose not half a mile away, looking like an outwork of the long line of mountain that sweeps by it.

It was at the fall of the leaf, and an autumnal sunset threw the lengthening shadow of haunted Lisnavoura, close in front of the solitary little cabin, over the undulating slopes and sides of Slieveelim. The birds were singing among the branches in the thinning leaves of the melancholy ash-trees that grow at the roadside in front of the door. The widow's three younger children were playing on the road, and their voices mingled with the evening song of the birds. Their elder sister, Nell, was "within in the house," as their phrase is, seeing after the boiling of the potatoes for supper.

Their mother had gone down to the bog, to carry up a hamper of turf on her back. It is, or was at least, a charitable custom—and if not disused, long may it continue—for the wealthier people when cutting their turf and stacking it in the bog, to make a smaller stack for the behoof of the poor, who were welcome to take from it so long as it lasted, and thus the potato pot was kept boiling, and the hearth warm that would have been cold enough but for that good-natured bounty, through wintry months.

Moll Ryan trudged up the steep "bohereen" whose banks were overgrown with thorn and brambles, and stooping under her burden, re-entered her door, where her dark-haired daughter Nell met her with a welcome, and relieved her of the hamper.

Moll Ryan looked round with a sigh of relief, and drying her forehead, uttered the Munster ejaculation:

"Eiah, wisha! It's tired I am with it, God bless it. And where's the crathurs, Nell?"

"Playin' out on the road, mother; didn't ye see them and you comin' up?"

"No; there was no one before me on the road," she said, uneasily; "not a soul, Nell; and why didn't ye keep an eye on them?"

"Well, they're in the haggard, playin' there, or round by the back o' the house. Will I call them in?"

"Do so, good girl, in the name o' God. The hens is comin' home, see, and the sun was just down over Knockdoulah, an' I comin' up."

So out ran tall, dark-haired Nell, and standing on the road, looked up and down it; but not a sign of her two little brothers, Con and Bill, or her little sister, Peg, could she see. She called them; but no answer came from the little haggard, fenced with straggling bushes. She listened, but the sound of their voices was missing. Over the stile, and behind the house she ran—but there all was silent and deserted.

She looked down toward the bog, as far as she could see; but they did not appear. Again she listened—but in vain. At first she had felt angry, but now a different feeling overcame her, and she grew pale. With an undefined boding she looked toward the heathy boss of Lisnavoura, now darkening into the deepest purple against the flaming sky of sunset.

Again she listened with a sinking heart, and heard nothing but the farewell twitter and whistle of the birds in the bushes around. How many stories had she listened to by the winter hearth, of children stolen by the fairies, at nightfall, in lonely places! With this fear she knew her mother was haunted.

No one in the country round gathered her little flock about her so early as this frightened widow, and no door "in the seven parishes" was barred so early.

Sufficiently fearful, as all young people in that part of the world are of such dreaded and subtle agents, Nell was even more than usually afraid of them, for her terrors were infected and redoubled by her mother's. She was looking towards Lisnavoura in a trance of fear, and crossed herself again and again, and whispered prayer after prayer. She was interrupted by her mother's voice on the road calling her loudly. She answered, and ran round to the front of the cabin, where she found her standing.

"And where in the world's the craythurs—did ye see sight o' them anywhere?" cried Mrs. Ryan, as the girl came over the stile.

"Arrah! mother, 'tis only what they're run down the road a bit. We'll see them this minute, coming back. It's like goats they are, climbin' here and runnin' there; an' if I had them here, in my hand, maybe I wouldn't give them a hiding all round."

"May the Lord forgive you, Nell! the childhers gone. They're took, and not a soul near us, and father Tom three miles away! And what'll I do, or who's to help us this night? Oh, wirristhru, wirristhru! The craythurs is gone!"

"Whisht, mother, be aisy: don't ye see them comin' up."

And then she shouted in menacing accents, waving her arm, and beckoning the children, who were seen approaching on the road, which some little way off made a slight dip, which had concealed them. They were approaching from the westward, and from the direction of the dreaded hill of Lisnavoura.

But there were only two of the children, and one of them, the little girl, was crying. Their mother and sister hurried forward to meet them, more alarmed than ever.

"Where is Billy—where is he?" cried the mother, nearly breathless, so soon as she was within hearing.

"He's gone—they took him away; but they said he'll come back again," answered little Con, with the dark brown hair.

"He's gone away with the grand ladies," blubbered the little girl.

"What ladies—where? Oh, Leum, asthora! My darlin', are you gone away at last? Where is he? Who took him? What ladies are you talkin' about? What way did he go?" she cried in distraction.

"I couldn't see where he went, mother; 'twas like as if he was going to Lisnavoura."

With a wild exclamation the distracted woman ran on towards the hill alone, clapping her hands, and crying aloud the name of her lost child.

Scared and horrified, Nell, not daring to follow, gazed after her, and burst into tears; and the other children raised high their lamentations in shrilly rivalry.

Twilight was deepening. It was long past the time when they were usually barred securely within their habitation. Nell led the younger children into the cabin, and made them sit down by the turf fire, while she stood in the open door, watching in great fear for the return of her mother.

After a long while they did see their mother return. She came in and sat down by the fire, and cried as if her heart would break.

"Will I bar the doore, mother?" asked Nell.

"Ay, do—didn't I lose enough, this night, without lavin' the doore open, for more o' yez to go; but first take an' sprinkle a dust o' the holy waters over ye, acuishla, and bring it here till I throw a taste iv it over myself and the craythurs; an' I wondher, Nell, you'd forget to do the like yourself, lettin' the craythurs out so near nightfall. Come here and sit on my knees, asthora, come to me, mavourneen, and hould me fast, in the name o' God, and I'll hould you fast that none can take yez from me, and tell me all about it, and what it was—the Lord between us and harm—an' how it happened, and who was in it."

And the door being barred, the two children, sometimes speaking together, often interrupting one another, often interrupted by their mother, managed to tell this strange story, which I had better relate connectedly and in my own language.

The Widow Ryan's three children were playing, as I have said, upon the narrow old road in front of her door. Little Bill or Leum, about five years old, with golden hair and large blue eyes, was a very pretty boy, with all the clear tints of healthy childhood, and that gaze of earnest simplicity which belongs not to town children of the same age. His little sister Peg, about a year elder, and his brother Con, a little more than a year elder than she, made up the little group.

Under the great old ash-trees, whose last leaves were falling at their feet, in the light of an October sunset, they were playing with the hilarity and eagerness of rustic children, clamouring together, and their faces were turned toward the west and the storied hill of Lisnavoura.

Suddenly a startling voice with a screech called to them from behind, ordering them to get out of the way, and turning, they saw a sight, such as they never beheld before. It was a carriage drawn by four horses that were pawing and snorting, in impatience, as if just pulled up. The children were almost under their feet, and scrambled to the side of the road next their own door.

This carriage and all its appointments were old-fashioned and gorgeous, and presented to the children, who had never seen anything finer than a turf-car, and once, an old chaise that passed that way from Killaloe, a spectacle perfectly dazzling.

Here was antique splendour. The harness and trappings were scarlet, and blazing with gold. The horses were huge, and snow white, with great manes, that as they tossed and shook them in the air, seemed to stream and float sometimes longer and sometimes shorter, like so much smoke—their tails were long, and tied up in bows of broad scarlet and gold ribbon. The coach itself was glowing with colours, gilded and emblazoned. There were footmen behind in gay liveries, and three-cocked hats, like the coachman's; but he had a great wig, like a judge's, and their hair was frizzed out and powdered, and a long thick "pigtail," with a bow to it, hung down the back of each.

All these servants were diminutive, and ludicrously out of proportion with the enormous horses of the equipage, and had sharp, sallow features, and small, restless, fiery eyes, and faces of cunning and malice that chilled the children. The little coachman was scowling and showing his white fangs under his cocked-hat, and his little blazing beads of eyes were quivering with fury in their sockets as he whirled his whip round and round over their heads, till the lash of it looked like a streak of fire in the evening sun, and sounded like the cry of a legion of "fillapoueeks" in the air.

"Stop the princess on the highway!" cried the coachman, in a piercing treble.

"Stop the princess on the highway!" piped each footman in turn, scowling over his shoulder down on the children, and grinding his keen teeth.

The children were so frightened they could only gape and turn white in their panic. But a very sweet voice from the open window of the carriage reassured them, and arrested the attack of the lackeys. A beautiful and "very grand-looking" lady was smiling from it on them, and they all felt pleased in the strange light of that smile.

"The boy with the golden hair, I think," said the lady, bending her large and wonderfully clear eyes on little Leum.

The upper sides of the carriage were chiefly of glass, so that the children could see another woman inside, whom they did not like so well.

This was a black woman, with a wonderfully long neck, hung round with many strings of large variously-coloured beads, and on her head was a sort of turban of silk, striped with all the colours of the rainbow, and fixed in it was a golden star.

This black woman had a face as thin almost as a death's-head, with high cheek-bones, and great goggle eyes, the whites of which, as well as her wide range of teeth, showed in brilliant contrast with her skin, as she looked over the beautiful lady's shoulder, and whispered something in her ear.

"Yes; the boy with the golden hair, I think," repeated the lady.

And her voice sounded sweet as a silver bell in the children's ears, and her smile beguiled them like the light of an enchanted lamp, as she leaned from the window, with a look of ineffable fondness on the golden-haired boy, with the large blue eyes; insomuch that little Billy, looking up, smiled in return with a wondering fondness, and when she stooped down, and stretched her jewelled arms towards him, he stretched his little hands up, and how they touched the other children did not know; but, saying, "Come and give me a kiss, my darling," she raised him, and he seemed to ascend in her small fingers as lightly as a feather, and she held him in her lap and covered him with kisses.

Nothing daunted, the other children would have been only too happy to change places with their favoured little brother. There was only one thing that was unpleasant, and a little frightened them, and that was the black woman, who stood and stretched forward, in the carriage as before.

She gathered a rich silk and gold handkerchief that was in her fingers up to her lips, and seemed to thrust ever so much of it, fold after fold, into her capacious mouth, as they thought to smother her laughter, with which she seemed convulsed, for she was shaking and quivering, as it seemed, with suppressed merriment; but her eyes, which remained uncovered, looked angrier than they had ever seen eyes look before.

But the lady was so beautiful they looked on her instead, and she continued to caress and kiss the little boy on her knee; and smiling at the other children she held up a large russet apple in her fingers, and the carriage began to move slowly on, and with a nod inviting them to take the fruit, she dropped it on the road from the window; it rolled some way beside the wheels, they following, and then she dropped another, and then another, and so on. And the same thing happened to all; for just as either of the children who ran beside had caught the rolling apple, somehow it slipt into a hole or ran into a ditch, and looking up they saw the lady drop another from the window, and so the chase was taken up and continued till they got, hardly knowing how far they had gone, to the old cross-road that leads to Owney. It seemed that there the horses' hoofs and carriage wheels rolled up a wonderful dust, which being caught in one of those eddies that whirl the dust up into a column, on the calmest day, enveloped the children for a moment, and passed whirling on towards Lisnavoura, the carriage, as they fancied, driving in the centre of it; but suddenly it subsided, the straws and leaves floated to the ground, the dust dissipated itself, but the white horses and the lackeys, the gilded carriage, the lady and their little golden haired brother were gone.

At the same moment suddenly the upper rim of the clear setting sun disappeared behind the hill of Knockdoula, and it was twilight. Each child felt the transition like a shock—and the sight of the rounded summit of Lisnavoura, now closely overhanging them, struck them with a new fear.

They screamed their brother's name after him, but their cries were lost in the vacant air. At the same time they thought they heard a hollow voice say, close to them, "Go home."

Looking round and seeing no one, they were scared, and hand in hand—the little girl crying wildly, and the boy white as ashes, from fear—they trotted homeward, at their best speed, to tell, as we have seen, their strange story.

Molly Ryan never more saw her darling. But something of the lost little boy was seen by his former playmates.

Sometimes when their mother was away earning a trifle at hay-making, and Nelly washing the potatoes for their dinner, or "beatling" clothes in the little stream that flows in the hollow close by, they saw the pretty face of little Billy peeping in archly at the door, and smiling silently at them, and as they ran to embrace him, with cries of delight, he drew back, still smiling archly, and when they got out into the open day, he was gone, and they could see no trace of him anywhere.

This happened often, with slight variations in the circumstances of the visit. Sometimes he would peep for a longer time, sometimes for a shorter time, sometimes his little hand would come in, and, with bended finger, beckon them to follow; but always he was smiling with the same arch look and wary silence—and always he was gone when they reached the door. Gradually these visits grew less and less frequent, and in about eight months they ceased altogether, and little Billy, irretrievably lost, took rank in their memories with the dead.

One wintry morning, nearly a year and a half after his disappearance, their mother having set out for Limerick soon after cock-crow, to sell some fowl at the market, the little girl, lying by the side of her elder sister, who was fast asleep, just at the grey of the morning heard the latch lifted softly, and saw little Billy enter and close the door gently after him. There was light enough to see that he was barefoot and ragged, and looked pale and famished. He went straight to the fire, and cowered over the turf embers, and rubbed his hands slowly, and seemed to shiver as he gathered the smouldering turf together.

The little girl clutched her sister in terror and whispered,

"Waken, Nelly, waken; here's Billy come back!"

Nelly slept soundly on, but the little boy, whose hands were extended close over the coals, turned and looked toward the bed, it seemed to her, in fear, and she saw the glare of the embers reflected on his thin cheek as he turned toward her. He rose and went, on tiptoe, quickly to the door, in silence, and let himself out as softly as he had come in.

After that, the little boy was never seen more by any one of his kindred.

"Fairy doctors," as the dealers in the preternatural, who in such cases were called in, are termed, did all that in them lay—but in vain. Father Tom came down, and tried what holier rites could do, but equally without result. So little Billy was dead to mother, brother, and sisters; but no grave received him. Others whom affection cherished, lay in holy ground, in the old church-yard of Abington, with headstone to mark the spot over which the survivor might kneel and say a kind prayer for the peace of the departed soul. But there was no landmark to show where little Billy was hidden from their loving eyes, unless it was in the old hill of Lisnavoura, that cast its long shadow at sunset before the cabin-door; or that, white and filmy in the moonlight, in later years, would occupy his brother's gaze as he returned from fair or market, and draw from him a sigh and a prayer for the little brother he had lost so long ago, and was never to see again.

THE WHITE CAT OF DRUMGUNNIOL.

There is a famous story of a white cat, with which we all become acquainted in the nursery. I am going to tell a story of a white cat very different from the amiable and enchanted princess who took that disguise for a season. The white cat of which I speak was a more sinister animal.

The traveller from Limerick toward Dublin, after passing the hills of Killaloe upon the left, as Keeper Mountain rises high in view, finds himself gradually hemmed in, upon the right, by a range of lower hills. An undulating plain that dips gradually to a lower level than that of the road interposes, and some scattered hedgerows relieve its somewhat wild and melancholy character.

One of the few human habitations that send up their films of turf-smoke from that lonely plain, is the loosely-thatched, earth-built dwelling of a "strong farmer," as the more prosperous of the tenant-farming class are termed in Munster. It stands in a clump of trees near the edge of a wandering stream, about half way between the mountains and the Dublin road, and had been for generations tenanted by people named Donovan.

In a distant place, desirous of studying some Irish records which had fallen into my hands, and inquiring for a teacher capable of instructing me in the Irish language, a Mr. Donovan, dreamy, harmless, and learned, was recommended to me for the purpose.

I found that he had been educated as a Sizar in Trinity College, Dublin. He now supported himself by teaching, and the special direction of my studies, I suppose, flattered his national partialities, for he unbosomed himself of much of his long reserved thoughts, and recollections about his country and his early days. It was he who told me this story, and I mean to repeat it, as nearly as I can, in his own words.

I have myself seen the old farm-house, with its orchard of huge mossgrown apple trees. I have looked round on the peculiar landscape; the roofless, ivied tower, that two hundred years before had afforded a refuge from raid and rapparee, and which still occupies its old place in the angle of the haggard; the bush-grown "liss," that scarcely a hundred and fifty steps away records the labours of a bygone race; the dark and towering outline of old Keeper in the background; and the lonely range of furze and heath-clad hills that form a nearer barrier, with many a line of grey rock and clump of dwarf oak or birch. The pervading sense of loneliness made it a scene not unsuited for a wild and unearthly story. And I could quite fancy how, seen in the grey of a wintry morning, shrouded far and wide in snow, or in the melancholy glory of an autumnal sunset, or in the chill splendour of a moonlight night, it might have helped to tone a dreamy mind like honest Dan Donovan's to superstition and a proneness to the illusions of fancy. It is certain, however, that I never anywhere met with a more simple-minded creature, or one on whose good faith I could more entirely rely.

When I was a boy, said he, living at home at Drumgunniol, I used to take my Goldsmith's Roman History in my hand and go down to my favourite seat, the flat stone, sheltered by a hawthorn tree beside the little lough, a large and deep pool, such as I have heard called a tarn in England. It lay in the gentle hollow of a field that is overhung toward the north by the old orchard, and being a deserted place was favourable to my studious quietude.

One day reading here, as usual, I wearied at last, and began to look about me, thinking of the heroic scenes I had just been reading of. I was as wide awake as I am at this moment, and I saw a woman appear at the corner of the orchard and walk down the slope. She wore a long, light grey dress, so long that it seemed to sweep the grass behind her, and so singular was her appearance in a part of the world where female attire is so inflexibly fixed by custom, that I could not take my eyes off her. Her course lay diagonally from corner to corner of the field, which was a large one, and she pursued it without swerving.

When she came near I could see that her feet were bare, and that she seemed to be looking steadfastly upon some remote object for guidance. Her route would have crossed me—had the tarn not interposed—about ten or twelve yards below the point at which I was sitting. But instead of arresting her course at the margin of the lough, as I had expected, she went on without seeming conscious of its existence, and I saw her, as plainly as I see you, sir, walk across the surface of the water, and pass, without seeming to see me, at about the distance I had calculated.

I was ready to faint from sheer terror. I was only thirteen years old then, and I remember every particular as if it had happened this hour.

The figure passed through the gap at the far corner of the field, and there I lost sight of it. I had hardly strength to walk home, and was so nervous, and ultimately so ill, that for three weeks I was confined to the house, and could not bear to be alone for a moment. I never entered that field again, such was the horror with which from that moment every object in it was clothed. Even at this distance of time I should not like to pass through it.

This apparition I connected with a mysterious event; and, also, with a singular liability, that has for nearly eighty years distinguished, or rather afflicted, our family. It is no fancy. Everybody in that part of the country knows all about it. Everybody connected what I had seen with it.

I will tell it all to you as well as I can.

When I was about fourteen years old—that is about a year after the sight I had seen in the lough field—we were one night expecting my father home from the fair of Killaloe. My mother sat up to welcome him home, and I with her, for I liked nothing better than such a vigil. My brothers and sisters, and the farm servants, except the men who were driving home the cattle from the fair, were asleep in their beds. My mother and I were sitting in the chimney corner, chatting together, and watching my father's supper, which was kept hot over the fire. We knew that he would return before the men who were driving home the cattle, for he was riding, and told us that he would only wait to see them fairly on the road, and then push homeward.

At length we heard his voice and the knocking of his loaded whip at the door, and my mother let him in. I don't think I ever saw my father drunk, which is more than most men of my age, from the same part of the country, could say of theirs. But he could drink his glass of whisky as well as another, and he usually came home from fair or market a little merry and mellow, and with a jolly flush in his cheeks.

To-night he looked sunken, pale and sad. He entered with the saddle and bridle in his hand, and he dropped them against the wall, near the door, and put his arms round his wife's neck, and kissed her kindly.

"Welcome home, Meehal," said she, kissing him heartily.

"God bless you, mavourneen," he answered.

And hugging her again, he turned to me, who was plucking him by the hand, jealous of his notice. I was little, and light of my age, and he lifted me up in his arms, and kissed me, and my arms being about his neck, he said to my mother:

"Draw the bolt, acuishla."

She did so, and setting me down very dejectedly, he walked to the fire and sat down on a stool, and stretched his feet toward the glowing turf, leaning with his hands on his knees.

"Rouse up, Mick, darlin'," said my mother, who was growing anxious, "and tell me how did the cattle sell, and did everything go lucky at the fair, or is there anything wrong with the landlord, or what in the world is it that ails you, Mick, jewel?"

"Nothin', Molly. The cows sould well, thank God, and there's nothin' fell out between me an' the landlord, an' everything's the same way. There's no fault to find anywhere."

"Well then, Mickey, since so it is, turn round to your hot supper, and ate it, and tell us is there anything new."

"I got my supper, Molly, on the way, and I can't ate a bit," he answered.

"Got your supper on the way, an' you knowin' 'twas waiting for you at home, an' your wife sittin' up an' all!" cried my mother, reproachfully.

"You're takin' a wrong meanin' out of what I say," said my father. "There's something happened that leaves me that I can't ate a mouthful, and I'll not be dark with you, Molly, for, maybe, it ain't very long I have to be here, an' I'll tell you what it was. It's what I seen, the white cat."

"The Lord between us and harm!" exclaimed my mother, in a moment as pale and as chap-fallen as my father; and then, trying to rally, with a laugh, she said: "*Ha!* 'tis only funnin' me you are. Sure a white rabbit was snared a Sunday last, in

Grady's wood; an' Teigue seen a big white rat in the haggard yesterday."

"'Twas neither rat nor rabbit was in it. Don't ye think but I'd know a rat or a rabbit from a big white cat, with green eyes as big as halfpennies, and its back riz up like a bridge, trottin' on and across me, and ready, if I dar' stop, to rub its sides along my shins, and maybe to make a jump and seize my throat, if that it's a cat, at all, an' not something worse?"

As he ended his description in a low tone, looking straight at the fire, my father drew his big hand across his forehead once or twice, his face being damp and shining with the moisture of fear, and he sighed, or rather groaned, heavily.

My mother had relapsed into panic, and was praying again in her fear. I, too, was terribly frightened, and on the point of crying, for I knew all about the white cat.

Clapping my father on the shoulder, by way of encouragement, my mother leaned over him, kissing him, and at last began to cry. He was wringing her hands in his, and seemed in great trouble.

"There was nothin' came into the house with me?" he asked, in a very low tone, turning to me.

"There was nothin', father," I said, "but the saddle and bridle that was in your hand."

"Nothin' white kem in at the doore wid me," he repeated.

"Nothin' at all," I answered.

"So best," said my father, and making the sign of the cross, he began mumbling to himself, and I knew he was saying his prayers.

Waiting for a while, to give him time for this exercise, my mother asked him where he first saw it.

"When I was riding up the bohereen,"—the Irish term meaning a little road, such as leads up to a farm-house—"I bethought myself that the men was on the road with the cattle, and no one to look to the horse barrin' myself, so I thought I might as well leave him in the crooked field below, an' I tuck him there, he bein' cool, and not a hair turned, for I rode him aisy all the way. It was when I turned, after lettin' him go—the saddle and bridle bein' in my hand—that I saw it, pushin' out o' the long grass at the side o' the path, an' it walked across it, in front of me, an' then back again, before me, the same way, an' sometimes at one side, an' then at the other, lookin' at me wid them shinin' green eyes; and I consayted I heard it growlin' as it kep' beside me—as close as ever you see—till I kem up to the doore, here, an' knocked an' called, as ye heerd me."

Now, what was it, in so simple an incident, that agitated my father, my mother, myself, and, finally, every member of this rustic household, with a terrible foreboding? It was this that we, one and all, believed that my father had received, in thus encountering the white cat, a warning of his approaching death.

The omen had never failed hitherto. It did not fail now. In a week after my father took the fever that was going, and before a month he was dead.

My honest friend, Dan Donovan, paused here; I could perceive that he was praying, for his lips were busy, and I concluded that it was for the repose of that departed soul.

In a little while he resumed.

It is eighty years now since that omen first attached to my family. Eighty years? Ay, is it. Ninety is nearer the mark. And I have spoken to many old people, in those earlier times, who had a distinct recollection of everything connected with it.

It happened in this way.

My grand-uncle, Connor Donovan, had the old farm of Drumgunniol in his day. He was richer than ever my father was, or my father's father either, for he took a short lease of Balraghan, and made money of it. But money won't soften a hard heart, and I'm afraid my grand-uncle was a cruel man—a profligate man he was, surely, and that is mostly a cruel man at heart. He drank his share, too, and cursed and swore, when he was vexed, more than was good for his soul, I'm afraid.

At that time there was a beautiful girl of the Colemans, up in the mountains, not far from Capper Cullen. I'm told that there are no Colemans there now at all, and that family has passed away. The famine years made great changes.

Ellen Coleman was her name. The Colemans were not rich. But, being such a beauty, she might have made a good match. Worse than she did for herself, poor thing, she could not.

Con Donovan—my grand-uncle, God forgive him!—sometimes in his rambles saw her at fairs or patterns, and he fell in love with her, as who might not?

He used her ill. He promised her marriage, and persuaded her to come away with him; and, after all, he broke his word.

It was just the old story. He tired of her, and he wanted to push himself in the world; and he married a girl of the Collopys, that had a great fortune—twenty-four cows, seventy sheep, and a hundred and twenty goats.

He married this Mary Collopy, and grew richer than before; and Ellen Coleman died broken-hearted. But that did not trouble the strong farmer much.

He would have liked to have children, but he had none, and this was the only cross he had to bear, for everything else went much as he wished.

One night he was returning from the fair of Nenagh. A shallow stream at that time crossed the road—they have thrown a bridge over it, I am told, some time since—and its channel was often dry in summer weather. When it was so, as it passes close by the old farm-house of Drumgunniol, without a great deal of winding, it makes a sort of road, which people then used as a short cut to reach the house by. Into this dry channel, as there was plenty of light from the moon, my grand-uncle turned his horse, and when he had reached the two ash-trees at the meering of the farm he turned his horse short into the river-field, intending to ride through the gap at the other end, under the oak-tree, and so he would have been within a few hundred yards of his door.

As he approached the "gap" he saw, or thought he saw, with a slow motion, gliding along the ground toward the same point, and now and then with a soft bound, a white object, which he described as being no bigger than his hat, but what it was he could not see, as it moved along the hedge and disappeared at the point to which he was himself tending.

When he reached the gap the horse stopped short. He urged and coaxed it in vain. He got down to lead it through, but it recoiled, snorted, and fell into a wild trembling fit. He mounted it again. But its terror continued, and it obstinately resisted his caresses and his whip. It was bright moonlight, and my grand-uncle was chafed by the horse's resistance, and, seeing nothing to account for it, and being so near home, what little patience he possessed forsook him, and, plying his whip and spur in earnest, he broke into oaths and curses.

All on a sudden the horse sprang through, and Con Donovan, as he passed under the broad branch of the oak, saw clearly a woman standing on the bank beside him, her arm extended, with the hand of which, as he flew by, she struck him a blow upon the shoulders. It threw him forward upon the neck of the horse, which, in wild terror, reached the door at a gallop, and stood there quivering and steaming all over.

Less alive than dead, my grand-uncle got in. He told his story, at least, so much as he chose. His wife did not quite know what to think. But that something very bad had happened she could not doubt. He was very faint and ill, and begged that the priest should be sent for forthwith. When they were getting him to his bed they saw distinctly the marks of five finger-points on the flesh of his shoulder, where the spectral blow had fallen. These singular marks—which they said resembled in tint the hue of a body struck by lightning—remained imprinted on his flesh, and were buried with him.

When he had recovered sufficiently to talk with the people about him—speaking, like a man at his last hour, from a burdened heart and troubled conscience—he repeated his story, but said he did not see, or, at all events, know, the face of the figure that stood in the gap. No one believed him. He told more about it to the priest than to others. He certainly had a secret to tell. He might as well have divulged it frankly, for the neighbours all knew well enough that it was the face of dead Ellen Coleman that he had seen.

From that moment my grand-uncle never raised his head. He was a scared, silent, broken-spirited man. It was early summer then, and at the fall of the leaf in the same year he died.

Of course there was a wake, such as beseemed a strong farmer so rich as he. For some reason the arrangements of this ceremonial were a little different from the usual routine.

The usual practice is to place the body in the great room, or kitchen, as it is called, of the house. In this particular case there was, as I told you, for some reason, an unusual arrangement. The body was placed in a small room that opened upon the greater one. The door of this, during the wake, stood open. There were candles about the bed, and pipes and tobacco on the table, and stools for such guests as chose to enter, the door standing open for their reception.

The body, having been laid out, was left alone, in this smaller room, during the preparations for the wake. After nightfall one of the women, approaching the bed to get a chair which she had left near it, rushed from the room with a scream, and, having recovered her speech at the further end of the "kitchen," and surrounded by a gaping audience, she said, at last:

"May I never sin, if his face bain't riz up again the back o' the bed, and he starin' down to the doore, wid eyes as big as pewter plates, that id be shinin' in the moon!"

"Arra, woman! Is it cracked you are?" said one of the farm boys, as they are termed, being men of any age you please.

"Agh, Molly, don't be talkin', woman! 'Tis what ye consayted it, goin' into the dark room, out o' the light. Why didn't ye take a candle in your fingers, ye aumadhaun?" said one of her female companions.

"Candle, or no candle; I seen it," insisted Molly. "An' what's more, I could a'most take my oath I seen his arum, too, stretchin' out o' the bed along the flure, three times as long as it should be, to take hould o' me be the fut."

"Nansinse, ye fool, what id he want o' yer fut?" exclaimed one, scornfully.

"Gi'e me the candle, some o' yez—in the name o' God," said old Sal Doolan, that was straight and lean, and a woman that could pray like a priest almost.

"Give her a candle," cried one.

"Ay, give her a candle," agreed all.

But whatever they might say, there wasn't one among them that did not look pale and stern enough as they followed Mrs. Doolan, who was praying as fast as her lips could patter, and leading the van with a tallow candle, held like a taper, in her fingers.

The door was half open, as the panic-stricken girl had left it; and holding the candle on high the better to examine the room, she made a step or so into it.

If my grand-uncle's hand had been stretched along the floor, in the unnatural way described, he had drawn it back again under the sheet that covered him. And tall Mrs. Doolan was in no danger of tripping over his arm as she entered. But she had not gone more than a step or two with her candle aloft, when, with a frowning face, she suddenly stopped short, staring at the bed which was now fully in view.

"Lord, bless us, Mrs. Doolan, ma'am, come back," said the woman next her, who had fast hold of her dress, or her "coat" as they call it, and drawing her backwards with a frightened pluck, while a general recoil among her followers betokened the alarm which her hesitation had inspired.

"Whisht, will yez?" said the leader, peremptorily, "I can't hear my own ears wid the noise ye're makin', an' which iv yez let the cat in here, an' whose cat is it?" she asked, peering suspiciously at a white cat that was sitting on the breast of the corpse.

"Put it away, will yez?" she resumed, with horror at the profanation. "Many a corpse as I sthretched and crossed in the bed, the likes o' that I never seen yet. The man o' the house, wid a brute baste like that mounted on him, like a phooka, Lord forgi'e me for namin' the like in this room. Dhrive it away, some o' yez? out o' that, this minute, I tell ye."

Each repeated the order, but no one seemed inclined to execute it. They were crossing themselves, and whispering their conjectures and misgivings as to the nature of the beast, which was no cat of that house, nor one that they had ever seen before. On a sudden, the white cat placed itself on the pillow over the head of the body, and having from that place glared for a time at them over the features of the corpse, it crept softly along the body towards them, growling low and fiercely as it drew near.

Out of the room they bounced, in dreadful confusion, shutting the door fast after them, and not for a good while did the hardiest venture to peep in again.

The white cat was sitting in its old place, on the dead man's breast, but this time it crept quietly down the side of the bed, and disappeared under it, the sheet which was spread like a coverlet, and hung down nearly to the floor, concealing it from view.

Praying, crossing themselves, and not forgetting a sprinkling of holy water, they peeped, and finally searched, poking spades, "wattles," pitchforks, and such implements under the bed. But the cat was not to be found, and they concluded that it had made its escape among their feet as they stood near the threshold. So they secured the door carefully, with hasp and padlock.

But when the door was opened next morning they found the white cat sitting, as if it had never been disturbed, upon the breast of the dead man.

Again occurred very nearly the same scene with a like result, only that some said they saw the cat afterwards lurking under a big box in a corner of the outer room, where my grand-uncle kept his leases and papers, and his prayer-book and beads.

Mrs. Doolan heard it growling at her

heels wherever she went; and although she could not see it, she could hear it spring on the back of her chair when she sat down, and growl in her ear, so that she would bounce up with a scream and a prayer, fancying that it was on the point of taking her by the throat.

And the priest's boy, looking round the corner, under the branches of the old orchard, saw a white cat sitting under the little window of the room where my grand-uncle was laid out, and looking up at the four small panes of glass as a cat will watch a bird.

The end of it was that the cat was found on the corpse again, when the room was visited, and do what they might, whenever the body was left alone, the cat was found again in the same ill-omened contiguity with the dead man. And this continued, to the scandal and fear of the neighbourhood, until the door was opened finally for the wake.

My grand-uncle being dead, and, with all due solemnities, buried, I have done with him. But not quite yet with the white cat. No banshee ever yet was more inalienably attached to a family than this ominous apparition is to mine. But there is this difference. The banshee seems to be animated with an affectionate sympathy with the bereaved family to whom it is hereditarily attached, whereas this thing has about it a suspicion of malice. It is the messenger simply of death. And its taking the shape of a cat—the coldest, and they say, the most vindictive of brutes—is indicative of the spirit of its visit.

When my grandfather's death was near, although he seemed quite well at the time, it appeared not exactly, but very nearly in the same way in which I told you it showed itself to my father.

The day before my Uncle Teigne was killed by the bursting of his gun, it appeared to him in the evening, at twilight, by the lough, in the field where I saw the woman who walked across the water, as I told you. My uncle was washing the barrel of his gun in the lough. The grass is short there, and there is no cover near it. He did not know how it approached; but the first he saw of it, the white cat was walking close round his feet, in the twilight, with an angry twist of its tail, and a green glare in its eyes, and do what he would, it continued walking round and round him, in larger or smaller circles, till he reached the orchard, and there he lost it.

My poor Aunt Peg—she married one of the O'Brians, near Oolah—came to Drumgunniol to go to the funeral of a cousin who died about a mile away. She died herself, poor woman, only a month after.

Coming from the wake, at two or three o'clock in the morning, as she got over the style into the farm of Drumgunniol, she saw the white cat at her side, and it kept close beside her, she ready to faint all the time, till she reached the door of the house, where it made a spring up into the whitethorn tree that grows close by, and so it parted from her. And my little brother Jim saw it also, just three weeks before he died. Every member of our family who dies, or takes his death-sickness, at Drumgunniol, is sure to see the white cat, and no one of us who sees it need hope for long life after.

CHOOSE.

My tender thoughts go forth, beloved,
Upon the pleasant morning hours,
With songs of mated birds, and sighs
From virgin hearts of opening flowers.

Full-laden with love's daintiest store,
Each smallest thought should come to thee,
As from the jasmine's hidden cell
Flies home the richly-burdened bee.

My joyous thoughts go forth, beloved,
Upon the golden airs of noon,
With languid sweets from roses rare
That flush and faint through ardent June.

With all the swiftness of the streams,
That fling out laughter as they run;
With all the brightness of the day,
With all the passion of the sun.

But when, along the cloud-hung west,
The purple lights grow pale and die;
When waves of sunshine roll no more,
And all one shade the cornfields lie;

When twilight veils the hills, and gives
A deeper mystery to the sea;
Then, O beloved! my saddened heart
Yearns through the distance unto thee.

STORIES OF LOUGH GUIR.

When the present writer was a boy of twelve or thirteen, he first made the acquaintance of Miss Anne Baily, of Lough Guir, in the county Limerick. She and her sister were the last representatives at that place, of an extremely good old name in the county. They were both what is termed "old maids," and at that time past sixty. But never were old ladies more hospitable, lively, and kind, especially to young people. They were both remarkably agreeable and clever. Like all old county ladies of their time, they were great genealogists, and could recount the origin, generations, and intermarriages, of every county family of note.

These ladies were visited at their house at Lough Guir by Mr. Crofton Croker; and are, I think, mentioned, by name, in the second series of his fairy legends; the series in which (probably communicated by Miss Anne Baily), he recounts some of the picturesque traditions of those beautiful lakes —lakes, I should no longer say, for the smaller and prettier has since been drained, and gave up from its depths some long lost and very interesting relics.

In their drawing-room stood a curious relic of another sort: old enough, too, though belonging to a much more modern period. It was the ancient stirrup cup of the hospitable house of Lough Guir. Crofton Croker has preserved a sketch of this curious glass. I have often had it in my hand. It had a short stem; and the cup part, having the bottom rounded, rose cylindrically, and, being of a capacity to contain a whole bottle of claret, and almost as narrow as an old-fashioned ale glass, was tall to a degree that filled me with wonder. As it obliged the rider to extend his arm as he raised the glass, it must have tried a tipsy man, sitting in the saddle, pretty severely. The wonder was that the marvellous tall glass had come down to our times without a crack.

There was another glass worthy of remark in the same drawing-room. It was gigantic, and shaped conically, like one of those old-fashioned jelly glasses which used to be seen upon the shelves of confectioners. It was engraved round the rim with the words, "The glorious, pious, and immortal memory;" and on grand occasions, was filled to the brim, and after the manner of a loving cup, made the circuit of the Whig guests, who owed all to the hero whose memory its legend celebrated and invoked.

It was now but the transparent phantom of those solemn convivialities of a generation, who lived, as it were, within hearing of the cannon and shoutings of those stirring times. When I saw it, this glass had long retired from politics and carousals, and stood peacefully on a little table in the drawing-room, where ladies' hands replenished it with fair water, and crowned it daily with flowers from the garden.

Miss Anne Baily's conversation ran oftener than her sister's upon the legendary and supernatural; she told her stories with the sympathy, the colour, and the mysterious air which contribute so powerfully to effect, and never wearied of answering questions about the old castle, and amusing her young audience with fascinating little glimpses of old adventure and bygone days. My memory retains the picture of my early friend very distinctly. A slim straight figure, above the middle height; a general likeness to the full-length portrait of that delightful Countess D'Aulnois, to whom we all owe our earliest and most brilliant glimpses of fairy-land; something of her gravely-pleasant countenance, plain, but refined and ladylike, with that kindly mystery in her side-long glance and uplifted finger, which indicated the approaching climax of a tale of wonder.

Lough Guir is a kind of centre of the operations of the Munster fairies. When a child is stolen by the "good people," Lough Guir is conjectured to be the place of its unearthly transmutation from the human to the fairy state. And beneath its waters lie enchanted, the grand old castle of the Desmonds, the great earl himself, his beautiful young countess, and all the retinue that surrounded him in the years of his splendour, and at the moment of his catastrophe.

Here, too, are historic associations. The huge square tower that rises at one side of the stable-yard close to the old house, to a height that amazed my young eyes, though robbed of its battlements and one story, was a stronghold of the last rebellious Earl of Desmond, and is specially mentioned in that delightful old folio, the Hibernia Pacata, as having, with its Irish garrison on the battlements, defied the army of the lord deputy, then marching by upon the summits of the overhanging hills. The house, built under shelter of this stronghold of the once proud and turbulent Desmonds, is old, but snug, with a multitude of small low rooms, such as I have seen in houses of the same age in Shropshire and the neighbouring English counties.

The hills that overhang the lakes appeared to me, in my young days (and I have not seen them since), to be clothed with a short soft verdure, of a hue so dark and vivid as I had never seen before.

In one of the lakes is a small island, rocky and wooded, which is believed by the peasantry to represent the top of the highest tower of the castle which sank, under a spell, to the bottom. In certain states of the atmosphere, I have heard educated people say, when in a boat you have reached a certain distance, the island appears to rise some feet from the water, its rocks assume the appearance of masonry, and the whole circuit presents very much the effect of the battlements of a castle rising above the surface of the lake.

This was Miss Anne Baily's story of the submersion of this lost castle:

THE MAGICIAN EARL.

It is well known that the great Earl of Desmond, though history pretends to dispose of him differently, lives to this hour enchanted in his castle, with all his household, at the bottom of the lake.

There was not, in his day, in all the world, so accomplished a magician as he. His fairest castle stood upon an island in the lake, and to this he brought his young and beautiful bride, whom he loved but too well; for she prevailed upon his folly to risk all to gratify her imperious caprice.

They had not been long in this beautiful castle, when she one day presented herself in the chamber in which her husband studied his forbidden art, and there implored him to exhibit before her some of the wonders of his evil science. He resisted long; but her entreaties, tears, and wheedlings were at length too much for him, and he consented.

But before beginning those astonishing transformations with which he was about to amaze her, he explained to her the awful conditions and dangers of the experiment.

Alone in this vast apartment, the walls of which were lapped, far below, by the lake whose dark waters lay waiting to swallow them, she must witness a certain series of frightful phenomena, which, once commenced, he could neither abridge nor mitigate; and if throughout their ghastly succession she spoke one word, or uttered one exclamation, the castle and all that it contained would in one instant subside to the bottom of the lake, there to remain, under the servitude of a strong spell, for ages.

The dauntless curiosity of the lady having prevailed, and the oaken door of the study being locked and barred, the fatal experiments commenced.

Muttering a spell, as he stood before her, feathers sprouted thickly over him, his face became contracted and hooked, a cadaverous smell filled the air, and, with heavy winnowing wings, a gigantic vulture rose in his stead, and swept round and round the room, as if on the point of pouncing upon her.

The lady commanded herself through this trial, and instantly another began.

The bird alighted near the door, and in less than a minute changed, she saw not how, into a horribly deformed and dwarfish hag: who, with yellow skin hanging about her face, and enormous eyes, swung herself on crutches toward the lady, her mouth foaming with fury, and her grimaces and contortions becoming more and more hideous every moment, till she rolled with a yell on the floor, in a horrible convulsion, at the lady's feet, and then changed into a huge serpent, which came sweeping and arching toward her, with crest erect, and quivering tongue. Suddenly, as it seemed on the point of darting at her, she saw her husband in its stead, standing pale before her, and, with his finger on his lip, enforcing the continued necessity of silence. He then placed himself at his length on the floor, and began to stretch himself out and out, longer and longer, until his head nearly reached to one end of the vast room, and his feet to the other.

This horror overcame her. The ill-starred lady uttered a wild scream, whereupon the castle and all that was within it, sank in a moment to the bottom of the lake.

But, once in every seven years, by night, the Earl of Desmond and his retinue emerge, and cross the lake, in shadowy cavalcade. His white horse is shod with silver. On that one night, the earl may ride till daybreak, and it behoves him to make good use of his time; for, until the silver shoes of his steed be worn through, the spell that holds him and his beneath the lake, will retain its power.

When I (Miss Anne Baily) was a child, there was still living a man named Teigne O'Neill, who had a strange story to tell.

He was a smith, and his forge stood on the brow of the hill, overlooking the lake, on a lonely part of the road to Cahir Conlish. One bright moonlight night, he was working very late, and quite alone. The clink of his hammer, and the wavering glow reflected through the open door on the bushes at the other side of the narrow road, were the only tokens that told of life and vigil for miles around.

In one of the pauses of his work, he heard the ring of many hoofs ascending the steep road that passed his forge, and, standing in his doorway, he was just in time to see a gentleman, on a white horse, who was dressed in a fashion the like of which the smith had never seen before. This man was accompanied and followed by a mounted retinue, as strangely dressed as he.

They seemed, by the clang and clatter that announced their approach, to be riding up the hill at a hard hurry-scurry gallop; but the pace abated as they drew near, and the rider of the white horse who, from his grave and lordly air, he assumed to be a man of rank, and accustomed to command, drew bridle and came to a halt before the smith's door.

He did not speak, and all his train were silent, but he beckoned to the smith, and pointed down to one of his horse's hoofs.

Teigne stooped and raised it, and held it just long enough to see that it was shod with a silver shoe: which, in one place, he said, was worn as thin as a shilling. Instantaneously his situation was made apparent to him by this sign, and he recoiled with a terrified prayer. The lordly rider, with a look of pain and fury, struck at him suddenly, with something that whistled in the air, like a whip; and an icy streak seemed to traverse his body, as if he had been cut through with a leaf of steel. But he was without scathe or scar, as he afterwards found.

At the same moment he saw the whole cavalcade break into a gallop and disappear down the hill, with a momentary hurtling in the air, like the flight of a volley of cannon shot.

Here had been the earl himself! He had tried one of his accustomed stratagems to lead the smith to speak to him. For it is well known that either for the purpose of abridging or of mitigating his period of enchantment, he seeks to lead people to accost him. But what, in the event of his succeeding, would befal the person whom he had thus ensnared, no one knows.

MOLL RIAL'S ADVENTURE.

When Miss Anne Baily was a child, Moll Rial was an old woman. She had lived all her days with the Bailys of Lough Guir; in and about whose house, as was the Irish custom of those days, were a troop of bare-footed country girls, scullery maids, or laundresses, or employed about the poultry yard, or running of errands.

Among these was Mary Rial, then a stout good-humoured lass, with little to think of, and nothing to fret about. She was once washing clothes, by the process known universally in Munster as beatling. The washer stands up to her ankles in water, in which she has immersed the clothes, which she lays in that state on a great flat stone, and smacks with lusty strokes of an instrument which bears a rude resemblance to a cricket bat, only shorter, broader, and light enough to be wielded freely with one hand. Thus, they smack the dripping clothes, turning them over and over, sousing them in the water, and replacing them on the same stone, to undergo a repetition of the process, until they are thoroughly washed.

Moll Rial was plying her "beatle" at the margin of the lake, close under the old house and castle. It was between eight and nine o'clock on a fine summer morning, everything looked bright and beautiful. Though quite alone, and though she could not see even the windows of the house (hidden from her view by the irregular ascent and some interposing bushes), her loneliness was not depressing.

Standing up from her work, she saw a gentleman walking slowly down the slope toward her. He was a "grand-looking" gentleman, arrayed in a flowered silk dressing-gown, with a cap of velvet on his head; and as he stepped toward her, in his slippered feet, he showed a very handsome leg. He was smiling graciously as he approached, and drawing a ring from his finger with an air of gracious meaning, which seemed to imply that he wished to make her a present; he raised it in his fingers with a pleased look, and placed it on the flat stones beside the clothes she had been beatling so industriously.

He drew back a little, and continued to look at her with an encouraging smile, which seemed to say: "You have earned your reward; you must not be afraid to take it."

The girl fancied that this was some gentleman who had arrived; as often happened in those hospitable and haphazard times, late and unexpectedly the night before, and who was now taking a little indolent ramble before breakfast.

Moll Rial was a little shy, and more so at having been discovered by so grand a gentleman with her petticoats gathered a little high about her bare shins. She looked down, therefore, upon the water at her feet, and then she saw a ripple of blood, and then another, ring after ring, coming and going to and from her feet. She cried out the sacred name in horror, and, lifting her eyes, the courtly gentleman was gone, but the blood-rings about her feet spread with the speed of light over the surface of the lake, which for a moment glowed like one vast estuary of blood.

Here was the earl once again, and Moll Rial declared that if it had not been for that frightful transformation of the water she would have spoken to him next minute, and would thus have passed under a spell, perhaps as direful as his own.

THE BANSHEE.

So old a Munster family as the Bailys, of Lough Guir, could not fail to have their attendant banshee. Every one attached to the family knew this well, and could cite evidences of that unearthly distinction. I heard Miss Baily relate the only experience she had personally had of that wild spiritual sympathy.

She said that, being then young, she and Miss Susan undertook a long attendance upon the sick bed of their sister, Miss Kitty, whom I have heard remembered among her contemporaries as the merriest and most entertaining of human beings. This light-hearted young lady was dying of consumption. The sad duties of such attendance being divided among many sisters, as they then were, the night watches devolved upon the two ladies I have named: I think, as being the eldest.

It is not improbable that these long and melancholy vigils, lowering the spirits and exciting the nervous system, prepared them for illusions. At all events, one night at dead of night, Miss Baily and her sister, sitting in the dying lady's room, heard such sweet and melancholy music as they had never heard before. It seemed to them like distant cathedral music. The room of the dying girl had its windows toward the yard, and the old castle stood near, and full in sight. The music was not in the house, but seemed to come from the yard, or beyond it. Miss Anne Baily took a candle, and went down the back stairs. She opened the back door, and, standing there, heard the same faint but solemn harmony, and could not tell whether it most resembled the distant music of instruments, or a choir of voices. It seemed to come through the windows of the old castle, high in the air. But when she approached the tower, the music, she thought, came from above the house, at the other side of the yard; and thus perplexed, and at last frightened, she returned.

This aërial music both she and her sister, Miss Susan Baily, avowed that they distinctly heard, and for a long time. Of the fact she was clear, and she spoke of it with great awe.

THE GOVERNESS'S DREAM.

This lady, one morning, with a grave countenance that indicated something weighty upon her mind, told her pupils that she had, on the night before, had a very remarkable dream.

The first room you enter in the old castle, having reached the foot of the spiral stone stair, is a large hall, dim and lofty, having only a small window or two, set high in deep recesses in the wall. When I saw the castle many years ago, a portion of this capacious chamber was used as a store for the turf laid in to last the year.

Her dream placed her, alone, in this room, and there entered a grave-looking man, having something very remarkable in his countenance: which impressed her, as a fine portrait sometimes will, with a haunting sense of character and individuality.

In his hand this man carried a wand, about the length of an ordinary walking cane. He told her to observe and remember its length, and to mark well the measurements he was about to make, the result of which she was to communicate to Mr. Baily, of Lough Guir.

From a certain point in the wall, with this wand, he measured along the floor, at right angles with the wall, a certain number of its lengths, which he counted aloud; and then, in the same way, from the adjoining wall he measured a certain number of its lengths, which he also counted distinctly. He then told her that at the point where these two lines met, at a depth of a certain number of feet which he also told her, treasure lay buried. And so the dream broke up, and her remarkable visitant vanished.

She took the girls with her to the old castle, where, having cut a switch to the length represented to her in her dream, she measured the distances, and ascertained, as she supposed, the point on the floor beneath which the treasure lay. The same day she related her dream to Mr. Baily. But he treated it laughingly, and took no step in consequence.

Some time after this, she again saw, in a dream, the same remarkable-looking man, who repeated his message, and appeared displeased. But the dream was treated by Mr. Baily as before.

The same dream occurred again, and the children became so clamorous to have the castle floor explored, with pick and shovel, at the point indicated by the thrice-seen messenger, that at length Mr. Baily consented, and the floor was opened, and a trench was sunk at the spot which the governess had pointed out.

Miss Anne Baily, and nearly all the members of the family, her father included, were present at this operation. As the workmen approached the depth described in the vision, the interest and suspense of all increased; and when the iron implements met the solid resistance of a broad flagstone, which returned a cavernous sound to the stroke, the excitement of all present rose to its acme.

With some difficulty the flag was raised, and a chamber of stone work, large enough to receive a moderately-sized crock or pot, was disclosed. Alas! it was empty. But in the earth at the bottom of it, Miss Baily said, she herself saw, as every other bystander plainly did, the circular impression of a vessel: which had stood there, as the mark seemed to indicate, for a very long time.

Both the Miss Bailys were strong in their belief hereafterwards, that the treasure which they were convinced had actually been deposited there, had been removed by some more trusting and active listener than their father had proved.

This same governess remained with them to the time of her death, which occurred some years later, under the following circumstances as extraordinary as her dream.

THE EARL'S HALL.

The good governess had a particular liking for the old castle, and when lessons were over, would take her book or her work into a large room in the ancient building, called the Earl's Hall. Here she caused a table and chair to be placed for her use, and in the chiaroscuro would so sit at her favourite occupations, with just a little ray of subdued light, admitted through one of the glassless windows above her, and falling upon her table.

The Earl's Hall is entered by a narrow-arched door, opening close to the winding stair. It is a very large and gloomy room, pretty nearly square, with a lofty vaulted ceiling, and a stone floor. Being situated high in the castle, the walls of which are immensely thick, and the windows very small and few, the silence that reigns here is like that of a subterranean cavern. You hear nothing in this solitude, except perhaps twice in a day, the twitter of a swallow in one of the small windows high in the wall.

This good lady, having one day retired to her accustomed solitude, was missed from the house at her wonted hour of return. This in a country house, such as Irish houses were in those days, excited little surprise, and no alarm. But when dinner hour came, which was then, in country houses, five o'clock, and the governess had not appeared, some of her young friends, it being not yet winter, and sufficient light remaining to guide them through the gloom of the dim ascent and passages, mounted the old stone stair to the level of the Earl's Hall, gaily calling to her as they approached.

There was no answer. On the stone floor, outside the door of the Earl's Hall, to their horror, they found her lying insensible. By the usual means she was restored to consciousness; but she continued very ill, and was conveyed to the house, where she took to her bed.

It was there and then that she related what had occurred to her. She had placed herself, as usual, at her little work table, and had been either working or reading—I forget which—for some time, and felt in her usual health and serene spirits. Raising her eyes, and looking towards the door, she saw a horrible-looking little man enter. He was dressed in red, was very short, had a singularly dark face, and a most atrocious countenance. Having walked some steps into the room, with his eyes fixed on her, he stopped, and beckoning to her to follow, moved back toward the door. About half way, again he stopped once more and turned. She was so terrified that she sat staring at the apparition without moving or speaking. Seeing that she had not obeyed him, his face became more frightful and menacing, and as it underwent this change, he raised his hand and stamped on the floor. Gesture, look, and all, expressed diabolical fury. Through sheer extremity of terror she did rise, and, as he turned again, followed him a step or two in the direction of the door. He again stopped, and with the same mute menace, compelled her again to follow him.

She reached the narrow stone doorway of the Earl's Hall, through which he had passed; from the threshold she saw him standing a little way off, with his eyes still fixed on her. Again he signed to her, and began to move along the short passage that leads to the winding stair. But instead of following him further, she fell on the floor in a fit.

The poor lady was thoroughly persuaded that she was not long to survive this vision, and her foreboding proved true. From her bed she never rose. Fever and delirium supervened in a few days, and she died. Of course it is possible that fever, already approaching, had touched her brain when she was visited by the phantom, and that it had no external existence.

The Bird of Passage:

A STORY OF A FIRST LOVE.

By J. SHERIDAN LE FANU, Author of "Uncle Silas," "A Lost Name," etc.

Chapter I.

A VOICE AND NOTHING MORE.

Everyone knows Golden Friars—that quaint old village of grey stone gables, under the shadow of dark elms that grow in little groups of twos and threes, standing by the margin of a lake which is built round with an amphitheatre of the grandest mountain.

Westward of this beautiful scene—so wooded, solemn, solitary—the aspect of the country changes gradually; and about twelve miles away from that little town, you find yourself in a region strangely different. It is monotonous, bleak, and repulsive, with the peculiar melancholy and ugliness that characterise a "moss."

Dardale Moss is said to be twelve miles long, and, in some places, seven miles broad. It is a wide black level, with only here and there a break or a hillock, or a tuft of furze, or a little screen of osiers, to vary the stretch of peat and quagmire.

The arable and pasture land, by which this dank expanse is encompassed as by a shore, throws out long promontories, or recedes into mimic bays. Patches of dwarf oak and hazel, and graceful groups of the silver-stemmed birch, irregularly fringe its edges, or gather thickly on the natural moles and causeways that throw their arms into the wide morass.

This sylvan skirting, and the irregular ascent of the ground immediately surrounding the moss, redeem its ugliness, and render many of its recesses positively picturesque.

The moon had risen over that black expanse, full ten miles long and eight broad, which is well known in one of our northern English counties, as I have said, as Dardale Moss.

The lonely young Squire of Hazelden was striding from tussock to tussock over its treacherous surface, homeward, his gun over his shoulder. There is not a living soul of his kith and kin in that home, for which, nevertheless, he feels a kindly attachment as he draws nearer. Excepting a few scattered boors and peasants, there is not a human being living within five miles of Haworth House. "So much the better," thinks the Squire, a little bitterly, for he is poor and proud.

The Squire that day had encountered but one adventure, which, except in the solitude of that region, would have been none at all. Before the storm had got up, as the sun was setting beyond the low horizon of the wide flat moss, he heard not far from him, issuing from the thickets of the wood that there skirted the moor, a voice with whose sweetness the melancholy of the western light and tinted woods accorded; it rose so clear and sad, that he stopped to listen as it sang these words:

"The hawthorn tree
Is dear to me,
The elver-stone likewise,
The lonely air
That lingers there,
And thought that never dies.

"In evening glow
The may will blow,
The stone a shadow cast—
And stone and tree
A bield will be
As in the summers past.

"And words as dear
Will others hear,
Beneath the hawthorn tree,
In leafy May,
At fall of day,
Where I no more shall be."

The long note died away as the last beam of the setting sun lighted the autumnal boughs of the wood, and silence and twilight came together. For some seconds he paused, enchanted; and then, curious to discover the minstrel whose music had moved him so strangely, he strode into the wood, and paced its rugged banks and hollows in a vain search.

After this he sate down for a while upon a rock, musing upon this song, which had left a vague tenderness in his mind; and I am almost ashamed to say that by the time he had recovered his lost ground, and resumed his homeward route, the moon had risen, and a high chill wind had begun to blow.

It is late in autumn now, and this prematurely wintry wind is sweeping the melancholy moor; the scud is drifting wildly across the moon, and the irregular groups of thorn and stunted oak and birch that gather near the edge of the wide moss are tossing their arms in an eerie ecstacy, as if beckoning the bogles and dobbies across that desolate expanse.

William Haworth, the Squire of Hazelden, is a tall active fellow, with a face that is gentle and manly, and light-brown hair and blue eyes—a Saxon supported by genealogy, for an ancestor of his fought at Hastings for Harold against the Norman.

Did ever young fellow lead so solitary a life? It has made him, perhaps, something of an enthusiast and a dreamer. It has not, however, impaired his energy. In this wild solitude he has passions, plans, and pride enough to find him work. His life is by no means idle or unambitious.

Striking swiftly towards his home among the bending trees, in the sweep of the cold wind, he found himself on a sudden before the Druidic ring of cyclopean stones, a relic of prehistoric times, for which among antiquarians that lonely place is famous. White, tall, and worn—they stood in the moonlight, which, chequered by the flying scud, passed over them with swift alternations.

Light and shadow flew on and on before him over the grass, in rapid pulsations, and the old stones alternately gleamed in dazzling light and sank in darkness. For the scud was driving across the moon, and the flying shadows rolled as if the sward itself was driving in ceaseless undulations beneath his feet and through those cyclopean columns.

Standing against one of these stones was a human form. To one who well knew the solitude of that neighbourhood the appearing of living man or woman at that hour, in such a place, was a wonder.

The wind was cold and wild. The figure was that of a tall slender woman with a cloak on, the hood of which was over her head. She was leaning lightly with her shoulder against the timeworn stone that rose from the grass high above her, and a solitary thorn-tree at her side was bending and tossing in the storm, in which also such corners of her cloak as she had not gathered close about her were flapping and quivering.

As William Haworth drew near she turned her head for a moment, and seemed to look toward him. She took no further notice of his approach, and appeared serenely indifferent alike about him and the storm.

The Squire had nothing of the leaven of the man of the world in him except ambition. He was the son of solitude and thought. He had his castles in the air, but spared not himself to make them one day real. Thus the romance and shyness of earlier youth remained with him, although his pride would have declined to confess either.

"I beg pardon—but surely you won't stay there; it is quite awful, and the night is growing wilder."

There was no answer.

"And it is so cold—miserably," he added.

"I am on a journey, sir," said a clear low voice, and the cloak did not move.

"Well, but you can't do without shelter, and the nearest is miles away, except my house; there are dangerous places, too, about this moss, and people have been lost in it. If you have no objection, good old Mrs. Gillyflower will make you comfortable for the night, and you are very welcome. The house is mine, and I am going home. She will be very glad to see you—pray, don't think of staying here."

"You are a man that is kind to the poor—you would wish to see them better," said the same voice, very silvery and civil, with no suspicion of the mendicant's whine in it, or of the uncouth dialect and intonation of those northern regions. It was the tone of a person whose opinion was of value, and who had a right to give it.

"It matters little what I am, provided I speak truth; this is neither hour nor weather for making a journey on foot, and the storm grows worse."

"It is past seven o'clock?" said the mantle.

"Nearer eight; it was seven when I passed the cat-stone at Elverden, and that is three miles away."

"Well, then, I will go—thank you, sir," said this voice, that he thought so sweet; and she made a little step forward and stopped, to intimate that she was ready to go when he should lead the way.

It is not always easy to say from what our impressions are gathered: perhaps it was something in the shape and bearing, no less than in the sweet and fearless tone of the female in the cloak, that resembles the grace of a princess who accepts a right, with a secret consciousness that in so doing she confers a distinction.

Men who live alone, if they are more reserved, are also simpler than their brethren who rough it, and revel in the inns and highways of life.

"Thank you very much," said he, very respectfully; and they walked together towards Haworth House, which stands close by.

Passing by moss-grey rocks, and tossing broom and bramble, and groups of birch and oak, over a very uneven sward, which she trod with a step as light and stately as a deer's, they moved side by side.

He longed to speak to her, but something restrained him, and never a word said she.

And now before them rises the strong old house of Haworth, built of grey stone, with a shingle roof and small windows; and the shadows of the ancient elms that toss and nod about it are sharp on the walls, or blurred, as the uncertain moonlight changes.

The hall-door has a great oldfashioned latch, and standing together under the stone porch the Squire essayed to open his door and give his guest welcome, but the bolts were drawn and all secure. Then he hammered at the door with the knocker, and then whacked the old oak more lustily with the butt of his gun.

"I'm so sorry the storm prevents their hearing," said he, a little ashamed of his hospitality.

Perhaps old Martha Gillyflower thought he had outstayed the due hour of return, and intended a hint to that effect.

"I'll call them, at the windows," said he. And running round the corner and to the far window, which is that one of the three kitchen-windows which looks from the side of the house, and having there summoned the garrison effectually, he returned to the porch before the hall-door was opened.

CHAPTER II.

HAWORTH HALL.

GOOD MRS. GILLYFLOWER was the Squire's housekeeper. Mall Darrell was a wiry girl—a "hobble-de-hoy," with a check bedgown, bare arms, and a rubber that had plainly touched the pots always in her hand, and one shoulder something higher than the other; and Mall constituted the household whom Mrs. Gillyflower chiefly commanded. There was, besides, Peter Clinton—a thick fellow in barragan jacket, and trousers always clayey about the knees; for he was gardener as well as groom, and outdoor factotum. Tom's thumbs looked as if they had been beaten broad long ago on an anvil, and his nails and hands were always grimed with garden-mould, and he lived in two rooms that were somewhere among the stables.

The hall-door being unbarred, opened with a swoop that carried Mall Darrell, who did the office of porteress, against the wall, and made the candle, prudently held a long way off in Martha Gillyflower's hand, flare with a great agitation.

"Come in, please," said William Haworth.

And the stranger in the cloak, fluttering in the breeze, stepped into the hall; and William got his stalwart shoulder to the old oak-door, and forced it, with a struggle, into its place, and there was an instantaneous calm; and the candle-flame was serene, and lighted stout old Martha's face till every wrinkle was marked, and every pucker stood out like those of a burgomaster's wife in a Dutch portrait.

When Mrs. Gillyflower beheld the stranger, her voluble welcome and remonstrance just commenced was suspended, and her lips closed. With her chin in the air, and the corners of her mouth depressed, she eyed the tall stranger askance, with a jealousy that bordered on dignified scorn.

Without removing her hood, the tall slender form in the dark cloak glanced quickly, this way and that, over her shoulder, and from under that hood William Haworth had just a shadowy glimpse of an oval face and a splendid pair of eyes.

It was but momentary and obscure, for now she was looking straight at the housekeeper, and the Squire could see again but the *tournure* of the draped figure.

"Martha—I say, Mrs. Gillyflower—pray attend to me. I wish you to make this" (how was he to style her?)—"this lady as comfortable as you can. There's a fire, of course—and tea—and—and supper. And she is making a journey; and she'll pass to-night under your care; and—and treat her hospitably and kindly, if you please."

The young Squire said this with an effort of self-assertion, for he was extremely embarrassed by old Martha's fixed and severe glance, which she had transferred from the unknown to him.

He felt indescribably disconcerted—he felt that he was looking "put out;" and his pride resented the contrast which it recognised in his guest, who stood there looking at the old woman with an air as serene as that of a princess who has taken the veil.

"Certainly, sir—you're master here," said the old servant, dryly; and making a short courtesy, that was rather a snub than a civility, to the stranger, she led the way to the kitchen.

He watched his guest as she walked down the tiled passage, and then he turned and entered his study.

The rooms in that house are not stately—very much the reverse; they are very low, and not very large. Here was one hardly fourteen feet square, wainscoted round with oak, with two narrow windows, curtained with thick red stuff, discoloured by time, and with a threadbare carpet, much too small for the floor.

But it is an extremely cosy room notwithstanding. It has a huge oldfashioned hearth, in which was then burning a cheery fire of mingled peat, wood, and coals, lighting it all up merrily. Right opposite, ticked from the wainscot that homeliest and snuggest of inelegant articles—a Dutch clock, near to which hung his trout and pike rods, his landing-net and gaff, an old silver-mounted pair of family horse-pistols, and a duck-gun; all round the room were fixed the antlers of deer—ancient decorations transferred from the hall; and the studious pretensions of the young man were vouched for by a few shelves, as rude as the other furniture of the room, from which his books showed their well-worn backs. All the furniture was clumsy and out of date, and before the fire stood a table hardly compatible with romance, on which were tea-things, bread, butter, and a red round of beef; while a brass kettle sang pleasantly from the bars.

"I do hope old Martha is really making her comfortable. I wonder who she is? If she is a lady, she does not choose to be recognised as such—that is plain. She will know, of course, that I could not have asked her, having no lady to receive her, into these sitting-rooms." He glanced round, and smiled as he thought the dignified phrase, for he did not actually speak it. "Well—yes; I may be better yet—finery, wealth; never so snug again, though."

I wonder whether moments ever came in which our liberated friend Robinson Crusoe regretted his cave, with its rude furniture, his chests and his hammock, and his harmless comrades the dog and the parrot, and dismissed the tranquil image with a sigh.

"I'll make no difference: I'll go to the kitchen at my usual hour, and smoke my ten minutes by the chimney; but I don't think old Martha would like to disgrace Haworth by neglecting a guest."

The young Squire was hungry; he ate heartily. And then he sat before the fire; and the thought of the beautiful figure in the dark mantle was with him still.

CHAPTER III.

A BATTLE WITHOUT RESULTS.

WILLIAM HAWORTH had poked the fire only twice, when a sharp knock at the door announced Mrs. Gillyflower. She closed the door, having stumped in, clearing her voice, not to lose time, as she did so, in such hot haste to speak was she; and she made a halt, and a "right-face," and a courtesy.

William was very fond of old Martha, and a little henpecked by her. Her air and look embarrassed him; he was in an unpleasant suspense, and had only time to say, "Well, Martha?"

"I'm come, sir, to gie ye warning; I'll leave you this day month, or any day sooner ye please. I a' been lang enough in Haworth House. I shouldn't ken the ald place, wi' the changes that's like to be."

"Why, what do you mean, Martha?—what have I done?" said the Squire, standing up and opening his hands in expostulation.

"What a' ye done, Master Willie? Well, I think when ye bring in a young fool o' a lass like that—a young lady, I believe I'm to call her—Lady, indeed! Cow-lady (ladybird) off the moss, more like—bring her in, I say, by the hand——"

"I did not bring her in by the hand," replied William, indignantly.

"And what has that to do wi' the matter, Master Willie? What does it signify, sir? Not that bit o' stick that's burning in the peat, there. But whether ye brought her in by the hand or no, it's plain ye should put her out by the lug."

"Why, what the devil has she been doing?" demanded William, firing up with a stamp on the floor.

"I don't say she's been doin' nout, did I? All I say 's this—and queer crackbrain'd work it is!—how does you and me know who or what she is? I won't make a butty o' such folk for no one; catterwaulin' over the moss wi' her company-keeper, mayhap—and a brave gowk thy've made o' you—and I'm vexed to think you'd be so dafy. Ye used n't to du a that lids, Master Willie—and what will the nebbers consait?—and what will the nebbers say?"

"Neighbours, indeed! I'd like to know where the neighbours are; and I give them all leave, when you can find them, to say what they please. I tell you, Martha, with your nonsense, you are enough to ruin the character of fifty men." And as he said this, indignantly looking on her consequential face and dumpy person, his own speech was on a sudden so very near upsetting him, that he turned abruptly, and I think his shoulders shook a little.

"Listen to me," he said, turning again, with a countenance graver than ever; "and perhaps, once for all, you'll hear reason. Returning home, only three minutes before I knocked at the kitchen-window, I saw this young woman—I suppose she's young, as you say so; I'm sure I don't know—standing alone in the storm, at the Mickle Steans. I suppose the poor creature meant to pass the night there. Would it have been creditable to Haworth House, and the old name, and to you as housekeeper, if I had passed her by, and left her in the mirk and storm—to be found dead, perhaps, in the morning, within tenscore steps of our door? Do you really mean to say that, in the name of virtue, I should have left her, the young woman as you call her, in a storm like this—do you hear the windows? do you hear the noise?—without a bield to shelter her, and perhaps to be smoored in the moss? I hope there's hardly such a monster on earth."

"Well, you know. Don't ye be in such a hurry. How could *I* know? and if, as you say, 'twas so near the door, and the night being so—I'll no deny. But ye ought to be prudent, Master Willie; ye're the head o' a house now, mind, and ye'll be looked to for example; and the apostle says—there's a waster on yon can'le—'ye must not avoid evil only, but the appearance thereof.' And I suppose she'll no' be puttin' her staff here, and she'll be gangin' in the morning; and 'twas very unfortunate the thing should have happened so, but being as you say, I suppose it just couldn't be helped, ye'll no' be makin' a custom of it, and that's all we can say about it, if we were to talk till doomsday."

Had the guest of Haworth Hall been short and crooked, pitted with the smallpox, and blind of an eye, this debate upon eternal principles would, I daresay, have been spared: Mrs. Gillyflower would not have had a word to say in favour of exposing young women, for whole nights together, to storms in the dark; and the ancient rites of hospitality would not have found, perhaps, quite so passionate a vindicator in William Haworth.

If feminine beauty be, in general, a letter of recommendation, it is also, with the gentler sex, a challenge and an alarm. It is only a different acknowledgment of the power of the talisman.

He laughed to himself, as he poked the fire for the third time. "Certainly it is high time I should stand up for my rights a little.

Good old Martha would tread down my prerogative to something very small indeed, if I allowed her to bully me as she seems to wish; in that I suppose they are all pretty much alike, but who is there like her in everything else? I could not live in this place if she went away, and she could not live away from it; she's the last of the old people here, and she's such an old darling! I hope, I'm sure," he suddenly thought, "she'll give her her breakfast in the morning."

Chapter IV.

SMOKE.

Now, it was a custom of our recluse Squire, every night at a quarter to ten (for which important hour he used punctually to set the "alarum" of his Dutch clock), to shut his book, take his pipe, and pay old Martha a visit in the kitchen, and have a talk with her as he smoked his churchwarden up the capacious chimney.

At that hour Mall's scrubbing and scouring for the day was over, and good Mrs. Gillyflower's labours of direction had come to an end; and the kitchen was tranquil, and the "housekeeper" disposed to chat a little before she betook herself to her bed.

The shrilly ring of the clock suddenly startled William from his book—it was a quarter to ten.

"Yes, my smoke. No, I'll *not* smoke here. I don't see why I shouldn't take my pipe to the kitchen, as usual, and have a look at her. I will."

And accordingly he popped his homely canister of tobacco into his pocket, and with his pipe in his fingers, and a candlestick in the other hand (for the hall of Haworth boasted no light), he set out on an exploration unusually interesting.

As he entered the tiled passage, he heard such sounds of merriment from the kitchen as had not enlivened Haworth Hall for many a day. The sound of laughter is not only cheery to listen to, but it excites a sympathetic merriment in the hearers; and alone as he was, and utterly ignorant of the fun that provoked it, William laughed quietly in unison, in spite of himself.

The laughter which echoed from the kitchen was that of hale old Martha, and the young clear cacchination of Mall Darrell; and between these peals he heard a low sweet voice narrating the story that, no doubt, stimulated all the mirth.

He could not find it in his heart to risk its interruption, and he waited, enjoying a sympathetic laugh, every time the merriment grew wild in the kitchen, until the story was plainly ended, and old Mrs. Gillyflower and Mall with great hilarity began to talk together.

When this had a little subsided, William, with his pipe in one hand and his candle in the other, entered the snug old kitchen.

His guest was standing in the attitude in which she may have recounted her story, with one hand on the tall back of the chair, and an indescribable grace, and even dignity, in her pose. He thought he had never seen so beautiful and singular a creature.

There was no vulgar flurry or fidget; she simply awaited his notice, if he chose to give it, with a serene self-possession.

Perhaps I shall best describe the points that struck him in the stranger, by transcribing a little pencil-note he made in his study, an hour later, in meditative idleness, to aid his memory in making a sketch. It is as follows:

"Black hair—*very* black; low forehead; small head, beautifully set on; large brilliant black eyes, with long lashes; an oval face; a very small nose; small pretty ears; very pretty mouth, brilliantly red; very even little teeth; complexion clear brown, with a colour seen richly through. Her figure, long-limbed, slender; flat shoulders, and very slender waist; distance from the waist to the feet, long in proportion; her hands small; in walking, her steps not long enough to show her feet before her dress; her dress, I think, a very dark-grey, comes up to her throat, and is long in the skirt. She has put aside her cloak; a very high bearing; an air of independence and equality that resembles command, yet very civil and gentle; perfectly self-possessed; her voice low and very sweet, with a pretty accent.

"How comes this something wild and queenlike, with so perfectly feminine a bearing?

"She *is* a lady—I think a foreign one; her accent is not quite English. A Spaniard, perhaps.

"Suppose she should prove an escaped nun!

"Not a bad conjecture. I wonder whether that is a conventual dress. I wish I had some drawings. We shall see its colour with certainty in the morning. I think I saw beads and a cross for a moment.

"We shall see how she bears the Bible; we shall hear what she has to say about religion.

"What a Diana she looks!

"I should like to see the villain who, as Sheridan Knowles says, dares touch her with but a look!"

This was jotted down an hour later, and the sheet of paper has several sketches, each an improvement on the other, not one satisfactory; and under his disappointing essays he had written, in a kind of despair:

"Or like the borealis' race,
That flits ere you can mark the place."

Whatever William had expected, he certainly fancied that the embarrassment would have been altogether on the stranger's side. Well, it had turned out differently. This girl—she did not look more than eighteen—was quite unabashed, and William somehow did not mind lighting his pipe until he returned to his quaint study.

He did not return to his book—that was pretty well out of his head.

It was simple curiosity, he told himself. Of course she was herself a very interesting person, he allowed, for he was a frank fellow; but it was the situation—the romance—the utter uncertainty, that really employed his thoughts; it was, in short, the story more than the heroine, he could swear, that exercised his imagination.

After he had bidden her welcome to Haworth Hall, and they had exchanged courtesies upon that occasion as guest and host, she seemed no longer to concern herself about his presence; her attention was unaffectedly engaged about other things. And while he was telling old Martha the story of his adventures on the moss that night, he was secretly mortified to observe that the stranger (for whom he perhaps intended it) was whispering something to Mall Darrell.

One thing was plain, and did not displease him: Martha Gillyflower had grown into something more than toleration of her, and the unknown had, in fact, grown into high favour with Martha.

William Haworth went to sleep that night thinking of his guest, and the first thing he thought of in the morning was the same runaway nun. But was she a nun?

She had made them almost die of laughing with the story of a series of adventures which a poor man whom she knew had undergone at a fair in Warwickshire. Was that the sort of story which a young lady who had taken the veil would have been likely to hear? On the other hand, why should she not? She had not always been a nun, and even nuns hear stories.

"I think old Gillyflower would like to keep her for a little longer;" and if so, he would give her leave.

Chapter V.

HER STORY.

Mrs. Gillyflower and she were sitting next morning in the kitchen, at the little deal table, with a coarse but very white cloth on it, and the tea-things. Mall Darrell had done her breakfast, and was washing potatoes and peeling turnips, quite out of hearing, at the open door of the scullery, through which, faintly, were audible in the kitchen the crow and gobble of the busy poultry; and close to the kitchen-window, that opened in the side-wall, roses, planted by Peter Clinton, shook themselves up and nodded in the comparative shelter, and tapped on the panes, while the tall trees outside swayed their boughs and rustled boisterously in the still vehement wind.

"Darrat ta, lass! yer no gangin' to-day. Why, see how it blaas, an' the branches swings, an' the Squire himsel' has bid ye. An' I tell ye ye'll no flit the day—ye shan't goa noo, not a bit—ye'll just bide where ye er; ye'll stay ower the night, an' gang in the mornin', if ye will. I like ye, lass; I see ye're none o' them flirligig fools; ye hev sense an' observation, an' ye ken the ald saw to 'be merry an' wise.' Ye can make a body laugh when ye like. But ye're no gilliver, not a bit; ye heve principles an' feelin' like mysel', though ye don't keep braggin' o' them, nor talkin' any such clish-ma-clash; an' I like ye, lass, an' I should na wonder if I came to like ye better."

Old Martha was talking heartily, and honestly too. She had formed, instinctively, a good opinion of her new acquaintance; and such opinions, mysteriously but irresistibly derived, command our confidence often more than any others.

She meant to be encouraging; she had placed her broad dumpy hand upon the slender one of the girl, whose arm rested on the table.

The girl looked at her with a grave countenance, in which were yet mingled expressions odd: something of amusement—something of disdain—something of liking.

"Well, Mrs. Gillyflower," she said, drawing back her hand sedately, "you're kind—I don't mind if I do; 'twill be four rounds of the clock to-morrow; after that, I provide for myself."

"Provide for yersel'? Well, I'm glad ye hev no care o' that sort to grieve ye; ye're sure ye can?"

"I can."

"H'm! Well, that's a comfort—people and friends, I daresay?"

"I have friends, and I have relations," said the girl, quietly.

"Where do they live?"

"A good many miles away, but not so far that my feet won't carry me to them. I can walk a long way, when I like."

Mrs. Gillyflower was curious; her little round grey eyes were peering vainly into the dark, fiery, unfathomable eyes of the girl.

She felt that this girl was a different nature—a more potent spirit—that she could make nothing of her.

"Well, lass, I tell ye what," said the old woman. "We are not ower rich here, any o' us; that is, we hev quite enough, d'ye mind, but none to spare. But I doubt ye'r ill-provided—an' I have a bit o' money by me—an' I'd like to lend ye a pound, an' ye'll pay me whean ye can, or whean ye like; but ye'll want somethin' by the way, an' ye'll no refuse."

The girl quickly replaced her hand on the dumpy fingers of the old woman, with a movement like a caress; and with a wild smile she looked on her for a moment, and said: "You are very good-natured, Mrs. Gillyflower—yes, and if it ever lies in my way to do you a good turn, I'll do it. Thank you very kindly; it was well-meant, but I don't need it, Mrs. Gillyflower. Look here!" and from her pocket she took a little scarlet-cloth purse with a silk cord tied round it, and poured out a tiny pile of silver on the table; and then, sweeping it back again, she continued: "And I'll tell you how I happen to be making this journey alone—I didn't intend, but you're good-natured—I ran away!"

"Ran away, child—hey? Not from a husband, though?" she asked, with a sudden consternation.

The stranger laughed.

"No—no! that never was our way. I've been used cruel bad. I've a stepmother. I wouldn't wonder if you had a stepmother yourself, once?" she added, after a moment's pause.

"Well, noo, that *is* queer. So I had, lass, that *was* a tazzle, I can tell ye, and mickle she made me dree. I forgie her, an' may God forgie her too! But I'll never forget her, if I was to live for a thousand year.—An' so ye hev a stepmother? Tell me more, poor lassie! I ween there was cause, an' to spare, why ye should flee out o' her hands, as Jacob did fra the hands o' his unnatural brother Esau."

"'Twas all about a man," said the girl.

"A man?" repeated Martha Gillyflower, much interested. "Well—go on, dear."

"She wanted to give me to a wicked man—the worst fellow, almost, she knew. Ha!"

The ejaculation was like a gasp, quick and hard, and accompanied with a strange smile that showed her little white teeth suddenly—expressed abhorrence powerfully.

"That fellow, as I guess from the looks and whispers of some that knows all about him, has murdered people—several, and I think I know where some of the graves is. Well, *there* was a man to choose! And I said '*No.*' She wanted to be rid o' me, for one thing, and to put me into the hands of a devil, for another. I said '*No*, I'd die first.'"

"Ye were right; I'd a' done the same mysel', lass. I telt ye, right. I kenned quick enough ye were nane o' them strackle-brained queans, I kenned ye had reason for what ye did."

"Ay, so I had. And she and I had words, and she snatched up the cudgel to break my head; and I caught it fast in my hand, and I flung her down; and 'twas just ay or no with me should I kill her—it's a heavy cudgel—'twas like lightnin'; I did not know myself—just a flicker, and a chance—but I didn't come down with it, and I flung it over the casties; and said I, ''Tis the last time ye'll ever lift that to me!' and I left her that night."

"And right well done o' you. I'm maist sorry ye did not gie her a clink whaar 'twould make her lugs sing, a-toppa t' head; but ye did right to spare her, 'twas only what a Christian should."

"And she'll try to set that fellow on my track," continued the girl, "to kill me, if she can."

"And where did you live?"

"Well—a good way off—the name don't matter."

"And where are ye gangin'?"

"To friends and kin."

"And had ye no kin living nigh yer stepmother?"

"Ay, some; they left me to her, though—they don't care. I have a grand-aunt there; if she was younger, she loves me, and would not see me wronged, but she's too old for that work; and—ye were so kind, I've told ye all—and I mind the time I thought there was not a sore heart or wildered brain in all the world.—Hey! Why, there's a bird and a pretty cage! That's a bullfinch, and it can't whistle, I'm sure, but I'll teach it!" And by this time she was beside the cage, and began very sweetly to whistle a little tune. "Ay—ay, see how he cocks his ear! I love birds! He will, the darling—he'll whistle, I tell ye!"

CHAPTER VI.

SUNRISE AND LIGHT.

PETER CLINTON rode the pony to the queer little post-town nine miles away, once a week, sometimes twice, when the Squire expected a letter, and brought home, at least, the county newspaper.

That morning the *Beacon of Northumbria* lay long on his table unopened. The Squire's head was running upon the adventure of last night, and the beautiful guest whom a chance storm had cast at his door. When at last he did unfold that chronicle, a minute assured him that "there was nothing in the paper." How wearisome seemed the doings of the magistrates, the price of sheep, even the excitement of the hour—the inquest upon the pedlar who died of a heart-complaint, at the "George," in Golden Friars!

But when he took up the paper a second time, a little paragraph, hid away in a corner, accidentally caught his eye, and instantly riveted his attention. It was printed in the following terms:—

"The neighbourhood of Fothergang, twelve miles from Tatham, on the old Harrowgate Road, and on the borders of Lancashire and Yorkshire, was thrown into considerable excitement, on the morning of the 14th instant, by the intelligence that a young nun had made her escape in the course of the night from the Convent of St. Mary, which was opened about five years since, as our readers will remember, with considerable *éclat*, near that hamlet. She is supposed to be travelling on foot, most probably in the direction of Morpeth, where she is stated to have some Protestant relatives resident, on whose protection she probably reckons. Formal information has been given to the magistrates of this elopement by the Superioress of the Convent, who thus invokes the aid of the civil power to recover the custody of the young person who has made her escape. It is understood, however, that some messengers in the employment of the convent are already in pursuit. In the convent she is styled Sister Euphemia—her real name has not transpired. She is stated to be under 20, rather tall and slight, with dark eyes and hair—intelligent, and good-looking. Her conventual faults were—'too great a proneness to talk,' 'restlessness,' a 'tendency to levity,' and 'a disposition to question the authority of superiors.' Great excitement prevails in the neighbourhood, and we need hardly say that the sympathies of the inhabitants are altogether with the poor young nun who has made her escape. It is thought that any attempt to bring her back publicly, and consign her to the tender mercies of the conventual authorities, would produce a very alarming state of feeling in the vicinity—possibly a somewhat riotous search and rescue within the walls of the convent itself. It is stated that the local magistrates have applied to the Home Office for instructions under the circumstances."

This piece of intelligence William Haworth read over and over till he could have repeated it, word for word, by rote.

Nothing in the paper, indeed? Floods of light!

William changed colour again and again—from red to pale, and from pale to red.

Had that eloquent paper, the *Beacon of Northumbria*, ever excited readers so fearfully before?

With a great sigh, at last the Squire laid the paper down, smiling darkly to himself over the discovered mystery. For the present he would keep his proofs to himself. With his penknife he carved the paragraph out of its place in the paper, and locked it up quickly in his desk.

He would not take old Martha quite into his confidence; but he must sound her, and put the solution conjecturally before her. Her opportunities were so multitudinous; trifles would help the proof. It was very odd, but the idea had struck him, at once, that this girl, with her singular manners and unaccountable dignity, might be what this paragraph very nearly proved her.

He might, he thought, fairly be a little conceited of his penetration. The thing, however, was not quite proved yet. The solution might be something quite different. But, with the same dark smile, he thought, "We must at least admit that it is not altogether improbable."

Half an hour after, also, Mrs. Gillyflower, having no one else to talk to, popped into William's study, and after some conversation—about Peter Clinton's administration of the garden, and the old kitchen-jack that would not wind—suddenly recalled his wandering thoughts, and fixed them in a moment, by beginning: "That poor young lass has been and telt me all that's foan-out at heyam, and ill-served she has been wi' a raggard stepmother. I ken that sort ower-weel mysel."

And with this exordium she told the story, and William shut his Sanscrit Dictionary, and stood listening with a romantic intensity, and his elbow on the chimneypiece.

The Squire of Haworth Hall had been a distinguished man in his college—a hard reader when he chose, a debater, a writer of essays; and he was, like many ingenious men with brilliant imaginations, one who could see a good way into a millstone.

"That young lady," said he—"for so I am sure she is—has a rosary with a cross to it; I saw it for a moment. Mind, Martha, this is quite between you and me, and you are not to repeat a word of it. She has quarrelled with her superioress, and possibly about some confessor she dislikes. She calls her superioress a stepmother, and so on. If we had time, I've a book there, which says, that when nuns have any complaint to make of their condition to people of the world, they often do so in allegory—I mean, a kind of parable."

"Well, that is queer. I never saa a nun in a' my days before, an' I should not wonder; but who'd think, to look at her an' hear her talk, she was that sly; but I consayted them nuns was always dressed in a windin'-sheet like, but doubtless you know best."

"Nothing, except from books. And she stays till to-morrow, then? That's right. The wind has shifted, not at this side of the house now; but still it is a high wind, and may be higher by evening."

"I left her whistling to the bird. She did look bonny, keekin' into the cage! She's a bonny lass, ain't she?"

"Yes—I daresay those who like dark beauties; but I'm held so fast to my books that my eyes are growing old, I fancy, and they can hardly admire anything. My eyes are on Sanscrit, and my heart in India. Not but I hope to come home, some day, with a hatful of money, to spend the rest of my days in the old place—where you are to welcome me back again, mind; and you'll keep the old house together, and the fire burning, while I'm away, and write me a letter every post; and you'll have my tea and a hot bannock ready for me, just in the old way, the evening I come back."

And, so saying, he placed a hand on each shoulder of the old woman, and looked very kindly down into her face.

"Hey, yer na gane yet, man—who kens?" said the old woman.

"True enough—who kens? as you say, Martha."

"Ay, ay—man proposes, God disposes; and I'll not be greetin' for my bonny lad, till I see his trunk packed and his hat on, for the flittin'."

And with these words, smiling bravely, her eyes filled up with tears; and turning briskly, she said:

"Hoot, lad—I'm wastin the whole mornin', and nothin' down for dinner yet, and talk 'ill never mak ye fat. Get along wi' ye, an' let's mind our business."

And away she trotted.

The Squire went to the window; and to the left, a little way off, he saw the tall slender girl, very busy choosing and plucking roses from the huge bushes that grew near the paling.

How her head is set on! How she holds herself! She steps like a deer. How beautiful she is!—how elegant! How small her hand is!

Her black tresses were blown in the wind, and her fingers brushed them back every now and then. He lowered the window, smiling. At the noise she looked round at him, from the nodding bunch of roses in her hand, standing quite still, very gravely. Then she said something he could not hear, and smiled a little anxiously, and looked gravely at him again.

"You are too much at the corner there," he called, smilingly; "it is quite sheltered this way."

She drew near, in her leisurely way, walking with her short steps and high air; and with her grave proud look, she said, with the roses in her hand, a little toward him:

"I was gathering some flowers, sir; I hope it ain't any harm?"

There is something interesting in that voice, so sweet and gentle, that contrasts, somehow, with the style of her beauty and her proud bearing.

"Would not you be better with something on? Aren't you afraid of this rough wind? If you'll allow me, I'll go and ask Mrs. Gillyflower for your cloak and bonnet; I'll fetch it in a moment."

"No, thank you, sir," she answered, still gravely, though he was smiling. "I like the wind; I'm used to it—it never hurt anyone."

"Well, you'll allow me to show you where there are much better roses, and I think other flowers?"

"Thank you, sir."

In a moment he was out on the grass—without a hat, of course; he would have been ashamed to wear one while her head was uncovered.

"It is so sheltered this way," he said, "just round this corner; and here, you see, the roses grow like great hedges."

And so they did—nothing the better of the wind, of course, but still very splendid festoons of red, white, and yellow roses.

"And this little nook is so sheltered; you don't feel the wind unpleasantly here."

It was a recess under the gable of the house, beyond which were the rear of tall stable-walls covered with ivy, and a great walnut tree threw its shadow on the grass.

"Oh, yes; those roses are very fine; may I gather some, sir?"

"Certainly," said William, in a lower tone, that confessed the power of beauty. "You are *very* welcome to anything, everything you like, at Haworth."

William's colour was heightened as he spoke. But there was nothing in the girl's manner to show that she thought herself addressed in any unusual strain, or that the speech could be made to comprehend more than the flowers she had asked leave to take.

For a few seconds they were both quite silent, and the handsome girl went on plucking these roses.

Chapter VII.

THE SQUIRE IMPROVES HIS ACQUAINTANCE WITH HIS GUEST.

William was longing to talk, but he did not know how to begin. He felt a little *gêné*. In the girl's serenity there was a feeling of inferiority that embarrassed him. He was very much afraid that she would have completed her task, and gone away with her arm laden with flowers, before he had made up his mind what to say. He was standing beside her without a word, and looking, he began to think, very foolish; and his awkwardness was enhanced by the secret misgiving, "What an ass she must think me!"

At last a thought struck him, and he said:

"I was so glad you stayed with us."

"You are very kind, sir—yes, forty-eight hours—thank you, sir."

"If you had gone, you know, it would have been as much as saying you thought us churls, and did not trust our hospitality; and I wish—it is not impertinence, I assure you—to ask you, if you'll allow me, just a question or two. May I?"

"Certainly, sir," said the girl, turning toward him, and standing like a picture of a Southern Flora, with her roses hanging clustered over her arm, and her eyes lowered to the grass near her foot. She does not look as if he were going to question her, but proud and grave, as a princess going to hear a petition.

"It was only this," he began. "Mrs. Gillyflower says you are going to make a journey, to the residence of some of your friends. I don't know, of course, what the distance may be; but if you will allow me, I will tell Clinton, and you can drive in the tax-cart, twenty miles, in any direction you please."

"Thank you, sir—that's very kind of you; but I'll walk, sir," said this independent heroine. "I've very good shoes, sir."

And, by way of demonstration, she put out, in a strong shoe, the very slenderest and shapeliest foot he had ever seen.

"Well—and will you pardon me this? You know you are very young," he added, wisely, "and you can't have much experience in travelling, especially in such travelling. And I rather think you have been leading a particularly quiet life."

He said this pointedly, *apropos* of another accidental glimpse of her rosary, and he paused for a little; but there followed not the least sign or movement to indicate acquiescence or denial.

"And at all events," he said, "I wish so very much you would allow me to renew Mrs. Gillyflower's offer; she is really quite unhappy about it, and so am I—very; you ought to have some little provision more than she says you have about you."

"That's good of you, sir, but I have more money than I want; very little would carry me a long way."

"I see you are more cruel than you look; you won't allow me to be of the least use—you'll accept nothing from us. I think that is hardly kind, Miss—Miss—— You have not even told me your name."

"Any name you please will do, sir."

"Oh, I may take my choice," he laughed. "I know that young ladies, when they betake themselves to a solitary life, change their names, as they do when they marry. Miss Mayflower, or Miss Nightingale, becomes Sister Eugenia, or Sister Cecilia; and I suppose you mean that I am at liberty to choose from the calendar, and I can't choose very wrong."

He said all this archly; he fancied—simple youth!—that he might bring about a confidence, and become a champion; and he was growing to feel that he would give half Haworth for a chance of fighting in her quarrel. But the girl stood, as before, with her eyes lowered to the grass near her foot.

"You've refused all my poor requests," said he. "I believe that compassion is killed in the shadow of the cloister, and a cruel purity, taintless and cold as snow, dwells only, in that colourless and freezing life. May I ask you a question?"

"Surely, sir."

"Is it true that you fear a revengeful man is in pursuit of you?"

"Mrs. Gillyflower told you that—did not she?" asked the girl, raising her splendid eyes to his.

"Yes, certainly, it was she," he replied.

"It is so, sir—quite true. That's why I stayed; I would not have him overtake me in a lonely place. He's always plotting mischief and rolling revenges. They say he's mad; drink, I think, has made his brain unsound. I should have to run and fight, and fight and run, for my life. He would not think twice; he'd fell me with his cudgel, as ready as look, and throw me in a brook."

"Thank you for speaking so frankly," said he. "Now, remember you are my guest, and your life is *dear* to me; you shan't leave this to-morrow."

"Have you heard he's about here?" she asked.

"No matter," said he, evading. "You must stay over to-morrow. I say I will not risk you."

"I would stay to-morrow, sir, only I'm sure my people will be looking for me; I sent them word."

"That's no reason. If they care for you as they ought, they should be only too glad that you were made safe until that ruffian is off your track. Pray remain; do—I entreat!"

He placed his hand upon her arm as he pleaded.

"It is very good of you, sir; and as you say, so I will."

"You have made me so happy," said he, and he did look quite radiant; "and I'll tell Martha. Perhaps you'd prefer that she should ask you; and would not it be well if you told her everything? You have no idea what a wise old woman she is. She could give you such good counsel, and who knows but it may end by your staying with her—for I'm sure you like a quiet life—a great deal longer than you ever dreamed."

And so he went on, eloquently, for a good while.

What was there so odd and unsatisfactory, in the expression of her beautiful features, as the girl listened to his eloquence? He tried afterwards to analyse it. It resembled the expression which they wore in conversation with Martha Gillyflower—the expression with which a beautiful girl might listen to the kindly prattle of a child who thought itself wondrous wise. Amused superiority and good-nature, and something of sadness and compassion, were there.

"Well, I've been giving very wise advice, as I supposed, and I see you are laughing at me," said he, with a smile.

"No, sir, I don't laugh; you would not think that, but what you say would not answer me; there's no one thing about it I could do."

She smiled genuinely now, and shook her head.

"Well, I've had my innings, and done no good; will you try now? I should be very glad of good advice. Here I am, a poor man, of an old but decayed family, and far from content with his lot: what do you advise me to do?"

"I'm not fit to advise such as you are, sir."

"Pray do, though. How can you tell?—how can I? I have no one to advise me, and your counsel might be the very best I could have."

"I don't think so."

"Well, but try—pray do."

"Do you understand horses?"

"No."

"Are you going for a soldier?"

"No; what would you change about me?"

"I don't know, sir; I think I'd throw the books out o' the window."

"Why?"

"They're not manly. Why should you be sitting all day, like a woman, in a room—stifling?"

"But I must earn money, and I can't do that without reading."

"Liberty is better than money. What does a man want, after all, but bread and health? Men shutting themselves up in a house, like ladies! I sometimes wonder they're not ashamed!"

There was no enthusiasm, real or affected, in this speech, which she spoke musingly; but it nettled him, for he thought he saw in her pretty face more of the old expression of amusement and disdain.

"Well, I for one don't like it—I hate it!" pleaded he. "But so it is. We must do it, or be nowhere in the great race."

"The great race up a hill, they say, and over a scawr; that's what makes them old and tired before they're well begun, spending their lives chasing—nothing!—in place of learning how little will make a man happy, and living in freedom."

He looked in her face, and somehow he felt that the girl was right, and life a fallacy and a perversion.

"I daresay you are right," he said, with a sigh. "I'm sure you *are* right; but we are entered so early for the race—in for the combat before we know; and then habit and pride. You speak truth, I think; but, after a certain point is past, truth only makes us sad."

"I'm going now, sir; in——"

"And—and—you won't tell me your name?"

"I could tell you many names, sir, that would do as well as mine."

"As well!—How?"

"As well to call me by, for a day."

"Well, you won't trust me."

"There's none but enemies near here that knows my name. I'd rather not, sir."

"I must only make a guess, then—shall I?"

"No harm, sir—no good; you'll never guess it," she answered, carelessly.

"Will you tell me truly if I make a good guess?"

"I don't think you will."

"I think I could tell you one that is very like it."

"Perhaps you could, sir."

"Well, then, I think it is not very unlike—*Euphemia*," said William Haworth, with a smile.

His meaning glance was met by a sudden flash from the girl's splendid eyes; and she looked at him, for a moment or two, with a sort of startled expectation. It subsided in a moment more, but the Squire had made his inferences.

"You see, I'm not quite so much in the dark as you supposed," said he, still smiling; and then more earnestly he continued: "But you are not to suppose—I am sure you could not do me that wrong—that if an accident has told me more than you intended to confess, I could be base and cowardly enough to permit any human being, while you honour my poor house with your presence, to trouble your quiet, or endanger your liberty. Pray rely upon me. We have never been cowards—never been traitors. I would defend you with my life!"

She looked with a side-glance of her large eyes in the face of the enthusiastic young man, and then down on the flowers that lay in a blooming sheaf on her arm, and said:

"Some folks say you northern squires are hard—but all agree you're proud—and you'll allow none, small or great, that depends on you to be wronged; and I think you're kind beside, sir, and would not like to see anyone in trouble. Is not that so?"

William smiled.

"You give us north-countrymen a good character, and me in particular; and I am too much gratified by your commendation to refuse it. But, be' that how it may, rely on us; we will take good care of you while you remain at Haworth."

"You are good to me—all," said the girl; "and, please sir, I'll go in with these roses now—very kind; and I hope God will bless you!"

"And, mind, you've promised you stay over to-morrow?"

"Yes, sir—thanks."

"Give me your hand upon it."

And so she did, instantly. What a pretty slender hand it was! He was holding it longer than need be.

"I keep my word, sir, always. I'm grateful, sir, for your kindness," she said, with a grave and gentle air, drawing her hand back at the same time, as if to settle the straggling flowers on her arm; and so she was gone, and he alone.

And William Haworth sighed, and leaned his shoulder against the tree, and sighed again. He was thinking of liberty, and sighing to think that yearning for it was vain as for heaven. And yet—why?

Chapter VIII.

"YOCK, NACK, BALLO."

That evening, in his study, William was disturbed by faint and far-away sounds of merriment from the kitchen. It is a house of thick walls, and strong doors, but in the silence of his room the merry vibration reached him. He went into the hall and listened, and heard, at the end of the passage which leads to the kitchen, such a hurly-burly of hilarity as he could not have conceived it possible for only three people to make.

The old housekeeper was screaming peal after peal of laughter, such as he did not think mortal could utter, and retain any breath at all. A wonderful grunting or snoring sound, uttered with a sort of rhythm, accompanied one of the oldest songs he had ever heard, the melody of which resembled a piece of church-music, with a wild comic refrain attached to it at every verse. It was sung by a very sweet voice—a demi-contralto, rich and powerful, which somehow he had no difficulty in allotting to the stranger.

Now what could the row be, he wondered: some fun, of course, that delightful girl has set going.

Well, certainly, she was the mistress of these revels, and very funny the fun was to witness, if not to describe.

They had been drinking their tea together—Mrs. Gillyflower, the guest, and Mall. Tea ended, the girl had resumed her work, and old Martha and the stranger began to talk. A very voluble companion, in truth, was this guest, and kept the old woman, who loved a talk and a story, very agreeably employed.

Now she was telling her a long story—the sort of thing that old housekeepers like to gossip over. It was about her mother's last illness, and her death.

There were touching incidents at the close, and the young girl told them with a true simple eloquence, that moved good Martha Gillyflower, albeit she despised the melting mood, to tears.

That strange girl did not weep, although she drew tears from the proud energetic old woman.

"Come—come, ma'am, you must cry no more; I'll bite your little finger if you do."

The old woman looked at her, not knowing what to make of her threat; for she seemed very serious, and showed the tiny edge of her white teeth.

"Na—na, lass! ye'll no bite my finger," said Mrs. Gillyflower, drying her eyes quickly, with a little severity.

"Don't you tempt me, Mrs. Gillyflower."

"Don't ye talk nonsense, child."

"Well, ye've stopped crying, and that's all I wanted. Mall's done her work; we're going to dance a dance for ye. Give her leave to come—do, please; pray do.—Mall! Mrs. Gillyflower says ye may come."

Well, Mrs. Gillyflower did agree, with just reluctance and conditions enough to reserve her importance, and in a moment the tiled floor was cleared.

"Where's the bellows? that's right—and here's a stick. Now, Mrs. Gillyflower—mind, I'm the bear-leader, and a fiddler beside; and the bear is sick, and I'm lamenting with him over his sickness, and we try a dance now and then, but it won't do; and Mall is the bear. I'll have her ready in a minute; and may I throw this wood on the fire to make a good blaze, that you may see us well? Come in, Mall—bring your candle—come into the room, till I dress you for the bear."

Grinning from ear to ear, in marched Mall, with lengthy strides, and in two or three minutes emerged with a vizard on, made of brown-paper stitched over with tufts of black wool, a clever imitation of a bear's head; her arms and legs encased in long black stockings, the feet of which were stuffed out so as to resemble two long paws. The gait of the bear had been carefully rehearsed. The bear was muzzled, and a cord from its nose tied round the fiddler's arm: and with bent knees, lifting its feet high at every step, and paws raised after the manner of a begging dog—her dark dress so disposed and tied about her as to harmonise with the other dispositions, and make a very good rough imitation of the brute—in came the interesting invalid, hanging his head, now on this side, now on that, and emitting dolorous grunts; while the woebegone fiddler, with his bellows to his chin, the stick, by way of bow, across it, and the cord about his arm—turning up his eyes in agony, or rolling them on the bear with rueful affection—gave a final charge to his associate performer:

"Now, mind all I said. Remember when ye sit down, and when ye stand up; and every time I call ye 'Sir Bruin, the Bear,' ye make a low bow, mind; and when I sing 'My son! my son!' ye hug me with your arms; and when I sing quick, 'Oh, poor fallow—Yock, nack, ballo!'* then ye dance round, first on one leg and then on the other; and when I say 'Chatters, mooie, cherro†—We'll drive him in the barrow,' you sit down fainting-like. And now look, Mrs. Gillyflower, please; we're just beginning."

It needed no such exhortation, for that good woman, with a recluse's appetite for fun, was staring and listening, all eye and ear, with a preparatory grin on.

So the dramatic dance and song commenced: and to those who have ever witnessed it performed with the gravity of genuine humour, the mutual and somewhat ceremonious respect of the bear and the fiddler, the suffering and the sympathy, the tender affection and condolings, and the momentary gleams of hope and hilarity—it will be no wonder that, before it had proceeded far, old Martha was in such screams of laughter that it was a marvel she did not roll off her chair, or die in the struggle to catch her breath.

The beautiful creature who played the fiddler could not, do what she would, divest herself of her grace and her prettiness, and her clever acting was made but the more irresistible by these pleasant incongruities.

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* In a foreign language, which the stranger understood, these words mean, "Eyes, nose, hair;" and were introduced in the refrain describing the ubiquity of the sufferings of Sir Bruin, every part being affected.

† In the same language, and similarly introduced, these words mean, "Teeth, mouth, head."

Old Martha shook—she shrieked—she rolled; down her cheeks streamed tears of merriment; she inarticulately waved her hands imploringly, to arrest the fun that was convulsing her. But it proceeded to the end, and caused the uproar that disturbed William, who, I am afraid, was beginning to grow more idle than was right.

He would have liked to pay his visit to Mrs. Gillyflower then, but he feared he might interrupt the fun. He stood, and listened to the strange hurly-burly, highly amused, and also interested. Sometimes he lost patience with honest Martha, whose roars of laughter almost drowned the song, which he thought wonderfully quaint and pretty, and the voice quite beautiful. I think he was fast falling in love with his mysterious guest.

"Well," said old Martha, breaking in on his solitude, "that's the lithesomest lass that ever I sid. If you'd a' sin how connily she did it!"

"I heard you laughing, and I thought I heard singing."

"So you did," cried Martha, hilariously, and she described the whole performance with boisterous merriment.

"I tell you what, I never laughed so in my life before; an' I saw a play in the York theatre, an' singin' an' dancin' there, but nothin' like this to make a body laugh. Hoot, man! where war ye that ye didn't come and see it?—ye'd a' never forget it while ye lived. I wish she may be as skilled in graver things, tho', but I don't know what to make of her."

"What is it, then? tell me what you mean," said he, struck by the sudden gravity of her looks.

"Well, I'll tell ye. I took down the Bible this evening, when we had done our tea, and I read a chapter; and she listened quite quiet, and when I shut it she asked me, 'What book is that?' I looked at her, thinkin' she was funnin' me. But twasn't nothin' o' the kind. Then I consayted she meant, 'What book o' the Old Testament is it?' So I said, 'Genesis.' 'And who wrote Genesis?' says she. 'The Bible,' says I, 'is the Word of God.' 'Ay, but you said this is Genesis,' says she. 'An' don't you know,' says I, 'that Genesis is a part o' the Bible?' 'I might a' known it,' says she, 'if I liked.' Well, that puzzled me a bit, and I looked at her in a sort o' jummlement, for I didn't know what to make o' her; and seein' me look so earnest, she laughed hearty, you'd think she'd a' died a'most. Well, I considered, an' remembrin' what ye said, I thought, if she be a nun she must be a Catholic, an' Catholics, as I've heard say, never reads their Bibles; so just to try, says I, 'To-morrow's Sunda, ye'll be comin' to church, I suppose?' 'The Squire goes to church?' says she. 'Yes, an' reads his Bible, too,' says I. 'I don't mind if I do,' says she; 'but my bonnet blew off on the moss the evening I came, and can ye lend me anything to put on my head?—an' I've no good clothes, nothin' with me.' So

Mall is stayin' at home, an' she'll lend her Sunda bonnet, an' she's comin' to church; so she can't be a Catholic, ye see."

"That does not follow—it is no proof at all. I've seen Roman Catholics in church. They have no objection—at least no difficulty. They can say their own prayers to themselves while ours are being read, and so don't hear one word of them. Have you ever seen her tell her beads, though, or tap her breast with her closed hand at her prayers?"

"I don't go into her room for her candle till she's in bed, so I can't say what her prayers may be."

"Have you ever seen her cross herself like this, before or after meals, when we say grace?"

"No, sir."

"They do it very quietly, to avoid singularity; but watch her to-morrow, and we'll see how church will please her. Her not being well up in her Bible looks very like it. I rely very much on first impressions. I think she is a foreigner, and I think she is a Roman Catholic. We shall see."

"Well," said Martha, "I'm jealous of that myself."

"And now I'll take my pipe to the kitchen; she won't mind, and it would be a pity to break an old custom," said the Squire.

Chapter IX.

THE RUINS OF HAZELDEN.

Next day William walked to Wymering Church, five miles away, whither Clinton drove Martha Gillyflower and her guest. The tall girl with her dark-grey cloak on, and a borrowed black straw bonnet of Mall's, and a black veil supplied by the good old woman, was a demure and nunlike figure enough. If she knew nothing of our church service, she nevertheless went through—shall I call it?—her drill very exactly; she imitated, I suppose, the down-sittings and up-risings, the kneelings and the courtesies, and the reverential air of the worthy old housekeeper, close by whose side she stood, enjoying, as they did in the quaint little church, a small seat to themselves near the door.

It is not possible, however, quite to veil such beauty as that of the young girl who stood beside Mrs. Gillyflower. That devout woman was made uneasy and indignant by the marked attention with which the three persons who constituted the worth and gallantry of that primitive place of worship regarded her companion. Squire Belleston, who lived four miles away at the other side, and is a lean young fellow of 50, with a good deal of gold-chain and jewelry, and a flower always in his buttonhole, ogled the pew, with marked but sly benignity, during the admirable sermon of the Rev. Doctor Runt.

Short Mr. Alfred Runt, the rector's eldest son and heir, did, in more earnest if less graceful fashion, the same thing; and young Mr. Sudors, the doctor's assistant, who had come all the way from Golden Friars to spend the day, sacrificed the entire Litany to ogling in a lost sweet way the selfsame point of observation—sucking all the while the polished ivory ball that forms the handle of his cane, and which he was very near swallowing in consequence of a sudden look of fierce detection from Mrs. Martha Gillyflower.

These interesting young gentlemen would possibly have given that discreet chaperone further trouble, had they not been entangled in the porch by their young lady acquaintances and others. So Martha in the tax-cart led by Peter Clinton, and the strange girl on foot, found themselves quite unmolested ascending the steep bit of hill under the old ash-trees near the church.

Perched on a bough of one of these great ash-trees that stoop over that narrow road, and half-hid among the ivy that thickly covers it, a little black-eyed sunburnt boy looked down on them as they slowly made their way up the hill. He dropped from the branch to the road, and ran after the girl, begging with the whine of a professed mendicant.

When the horses had reached the top of the hill, the girl had fallen some way behind, and was talking with the little fellow, who was walking slowly up the hill beside her. She questioned the boy sharply, and lent an attentive ear, with a very thoughtful face, as he answered volubly. When Clinton looked back, he saw her dismiss him with a wave of her hand; and then she hurried after the tax-cart, and got up in silence, with an anxious and pale face, and did not speak to Martha till they had got a long way towards home.

"How long have you lived, Mrs. Gillyflower?" she asked, at last.

"Hoot, lass—there's a question! Well, a good while, ye may suppose."

"Well—well! well—well!" said the girl, sadly.

"And what's the matter now, wisehead?"

"I was thinking ye must be pretty well tired," she said, sweetly, with a shrug.

"Tired! Not I, lass; I'm good for twenty years yet."

"I don't know what we're put here for. Life's a fire that burns *sore*, Mrs. Gillyflower; I'd rather mine was cold," wailed the girl. "'Taint long cutting a grave, and then there's no more trouble about a poor fool!"

"By Jen, here's a doleful homminy!" said the old woman. "Do ye want to put us in the dumps? Awa' wi' ye, ye goose!"

"Goose and gander; your parson said the same to-day—up in his box," said the girl, more like herself. "If I'm a fool, he's a bigger!

And what are you, Mrs. Gillyflower, to go all that way to listen to his preachment?"

"There's a wide difference between a parson in a pulpit and a chit like you, lass, jiggin' heam in a gig. Can't ye talk o' something else, dear, and leave those things to sich as understand them?"

"That's a secret we'll all understand some day" said the girl, and laughed gently.

About an hour later William tapped at the kitchen-window, close to which the girl was whistling to the bullfinch.

"Come out, Miss Perdita, please, till I show you one of our castles; and if old Martha hears you whistling on Sunday, I don't know what may happen. I know *I* dare not do it."

She blushed, she laughed, and she ran out.

"You were very good to come, and make no favour of it," said William, speaking low.

"It is none, sir. It may lie in my power yet to serve you, and if it should, I will."

"I'm sure you would—though I don't deserve it. I call you Miss Perdita, because I don't know your name, and you won't tell it; and I should consider that a favour, for instance, if you would."

"Any name you please, sir. Names are nothing."

"We go by this path. You see the ruin, quite close to us. We lived there once, before this house was built. But why won't you tell me your name?—aint that very unkind?".

"'Twould be no kindness to tell it, sir; my name's no consequence."

"If you knew me better, perhaps you would tell it?"

"Yes, sir—if I knew you better."

"And liked me better?"

"I'm of no consequence, sir; I shan't be here long," she said, very gravely. "I should not like my name mentioned. If some people could find out where I was, they would hurt me, I think; and please, sir, don't ask me."

He walked on a few steps in silence, looking down at the grass near his feet—disappointed. After a while, said William, raising his eyes, and looking about him:

"There is one place that I have been at, that is wonderfully like this; and oh! I wish I knew everything that has ever happened there."

Rather a crazy speech was this, but he looked serious enough. He was thinking of the paragraph about the fugitive nun in the *Beacon of Northumbria*, which had begun to trouble him.

"It is a place on the borders of Lancashire and Yorkshire; it is very like this—only it has a nunnery, but that is in a hollow, and shows very little; and there is a ruined castle there—so like this—with just the same kind of trees about it; it is called Fothergang, and I think you have been there, not very long ago; I'm nearly sure—and—will you tell me?"

It was not mere curiosity that urged this question. It was an entreaty rather than a question, and urged with an earnestness that was pathetic.

The girl looked at him darkly with a side-glance for a second, and dropped her eyes, and then looked, in silence, at the walls of the old castle; and then, with a fearless look at William, dismissing her momentary embarrassment, and with a little tone of defiance in what she said, she answered:

"Yes, sir, I have seen that place; I suppose you have been told so. I've been at Fothergang lately; and now you may tell the people that's looking for me, if ye like."

She turned away slowly, pale, and with a faint smile in which he saw pain and scorn.

"Tell those people!" he repeated. "Why, I'd *die* to protect you! How can you—how could you—say anything so cruel? Not to living creature but yourself should I for worlds say anything that could endanger you!"

"I was vexed. I don't think, maybe, all I said; and I won't talk of Fothergang another word."

"Nor I," said the Squire; "nor ask a question."

A considerable silence intervened before he resumed his office of cicerone.

"From this little knoll it looks very well. I don't know why they did not go on living there; it was a much finer building than the house. The house was built just 180 years ago, and we have been growing poorer and poorer ever since. It was not lucky, you see. There used to be fighting here long ago, in these northern counties—very different from our times. We had seven castles; that is half as many as the Howards had," said William.

"One house is enough for a family—and too much often," she said, quietly.

"You mean where there is not money to keep it," said William, with a shrug and a laugh.

"You say you're poor, sir, but you've been very kind; would not it be vile in me to laugh at your poverty? You'll not think so of me." She looked beautifully proud, and her fiery black eyes turned on him for a moment. "I would not let anyone make little of you, sir."

I don't know that William Haworth had ever felt so gratified before. He was silent for a little time—he was so happy and proud.

He did not acknowledge it; he went on speaking of the ruined towers before them. He was looking at her, and had never seen, he thought, anything so beautiful. William Haworth, you never were in so great danger before! He was growing, without half knowing it, to love her.

"Come as far as that door; through it you can see a great deal."

They stood side by side, and she looked into the *chiaroscuro* of the old chamber; and on its great stone angle, on which was seen the chiselling of seven hundred years before, she leaned her hand, an image of perishable youth and grace.

"You never saw a place like that before, did you?" said William.

"Oh yes, sir; we were once close to one very like this. I used to be in it every day, running up and down a curlikew stair like that, and running along the wall at top; I was always very nimble."

So William told his story, and pointed out all that was worth seeing; and, leaning on the side of the doorway, he looked at her and sighed.

"I like *you* better every hour; it is hard you don't like me better!" and with this odd and sad speech he was silent. Then he said:

"I tell you what—I'll set this down in my mind. Whenever you tell me your name, it will be a sign that you trust me more, and like me better; and I won't ask—you shall do it of yourself. But I'll tell you mine. My name is Willie, and you must call me by it, and never '*Sir*' any more."

"I'm only a poor girl, sir; I could not do that."

"You will—I entreat!"

"No, sir. My people—we keep separate—they like that best. I'll take no such freedom, sir; I'm only a poor girl."

"No, you're not poor. You're the wealthiest girl in England, in the true wealth of beauty, and grace, and mind; and the finest lady that ever I saw or could imagine!"

"I did not think you could talk so foolish, sir," said the girl, turning her head toward home, with a pained look.

"Is it foolish ever to speak the truth?" said he, impetuously.

"I'm going home, sir, to the house; the old lady will be expecting me. There was a thing I was going to tell you—a question to ask—but that don't matter."

"But it does matter; I implore of you to tell me!"

"No, sir. I don't like that wild talk you're so fond of—it's making little of me."

"It was, perhaps, very wrong," he said, after a moment's thought. "I'll be quite different, you'll see. You must forgive me. You don't think—you couldn't—that I ever forgot the respect I owe you?"

"No, I don't think that; but I don't like it, sir, nohow; and can't we talk quiet, like other folk?"

"Well—well, can I do more than promise? I won't; I'll speak just as you please. I'll keep my word, upon my honour!"

"Well, sir, I'll tell you."

The Bird of Passage:

A STORY OF A FIRST LOVE.

By J. SHERIDAN LE FANU, Author of "Uncle Silas," "A Lost Name," etc.

Chapter X.

THE TWO PURSUERS.

"It is only this, sir," said the girl. "A friend has warned me, that two men, who bear me an illwill, are coming to the Fair of Willarden on Tuesday, and that they believe I am somewhere about this part of the country, and think to meet with me there. So, sir, I'll leave this place early in the morning, before light; and I know the road they're coming, and I can be sure, by making a round, to keep clear of them—and get safe, I hope, to my own friends. And I'm very grateful, sir, for your kindness. You've been good to me—may God bless you!"

"Oh, no! you're not to think of going yet. How can you like to torture me so? What is old Martha to do without you? Don't you feel safe where you are? You say I've been kind. I know it is not in my power to show the kindness I feel—it is the curse of being so poor; but surely you won't be so cruel as to go, on this short notice. It is the one favour I ask, that you don't leave us for a few days—a week. These fellows will soon have left this part of the world; but in the meantime, how can you, or anyone, tell where they may be prowling? And—and—I *entreat* you'll not think of it."

There was no mistaking the genuineness of his entreaty.

"Well, sir, it is a good chance to get clear away, but I won't go for a few days. You ought not to tell me to stay. If I do, I can't go till I learn what way they travel after the fair, and that could not be till Wednesday. I've been here too long—I have indeed, sir; it is best to go."

"You are not to go. You consented to stay. I have your promise, and you must keep it."

The girl looked in his face, and laughed low, and not unkindly.

"I like this place," she said. "I like Mrs. Martha: you're all good to me. I like Haworth, for a while, but I couldn't stay long—no, no, I couldn't."

"Well, that can't be helped, when the time comes; but you must stay a week, and then good-bye. We'll not think of it till the time comes; and then, if fate will have it so, farewell, our pleasant friend."

They walked side by side, a little way, in silence.

"Tell me," he said, "if I should chance to meet those fellows, that I may know them and give you warning: what are they like, and what are their names?"

"There's two, sir. They are very bad fellows. The old fellow is of middle height, but very broad in the shoulders, and awful strong—with a very brown face, and a flat nose, and very long black hair, and with always a stick in his hand—and he goes by the name of Cowper. The young man is tall and light-built, and he goes by the name of Lussha Sinfield. He wears a short coat, and he has a coloured kerchief about his neck, red-and-green, commonly. He has now got two horses to sell; one is chestnut, and the other, taller by a hand or more, is an iron-grey hunter. He rides very well; he'll be putting the horse over jumps, to show him off, and he's quick to quarrel, and bloody-minded; and he never forgets a wry word, or an ill-turn—he's sure to pay you off some day; and he's very strong, and awful good at the cudgel. He got three months in jail, they say, for killing a man, with a rap across the temple, in Lincoln. It was a fair fight, though, and that saved him. He has a cudgel in his hand commonly, and if he should get into a quarrel without one, the old man is sure to be nigh, and lends him his. And the old fellow will be going to and fro in the fair, you'd suppose he had nothing to do, but he's after his own business for all that; and if you should see them anywhere near here, I'd like well you'd tell me, for there's not two blacker-hearted men in England, or that wishes any creature worse than they do to me."

"If I can help it they shan't vex you. Why do you look so troubled? While you stay here it is impossible—the miscreants!—you are as safe as if you were in the Queen's palace. But tell me how it happens that these men should hate and pursue you—so young, and, if it were nothing else, so powerless, as you are, to harm them?"

"I despised them, sir; and I said they were thieves and worse, and they never forgive anything or anyone; and they are cunning, sir, not easy to match them. If I was with my people, sir, I would not care, but it is a long way still. Those fellows would come here in a minute, if they thought they might find me, pretending to sell their horses—and there's my danger."

"But they are to be at the fair on Tuesday?"

"Yes, sir."

"And do you know what road they are coming?"

"Up, sir, from the south."

"Well, this lies quite out of their way—to the left, don't you see? You are quite safe here, for the present, and I think I shall hear something about their movements. I shall learn all about them, and have them properly watched; and mind, you have promised to stay quietly here, a little longer—for a week, at least."

"I say again, God bless you, sir! Now I'll go in, sir, please; Mrs. Gillyflower will be wondering where I am."

"In a moment—only one word. I thought you had been in a convent, and had made your escape—that, I daresay, is all a mistake; but—will you forgive me?—your accent, your way of speaking, makes me think you have been with foreigners, and your appearance is foreign; and only one question—if it is impertinent, say so—but do any of your people live in Spain?"

"Yes, sir; when we were staying for awhile at a place called Church Sterndale, in Derbyshire, we met a man there; he was in trouble, but he had seen them there, and told us a deal about them. And I didn't much mind; I was a young thing then—just a fool of a child, sprawlin' on the grass, and stringin' daisies, and blowin' the clock-flower to see what hour it was; and I listened in a way, for it seemed to me like a story of king and queen, and the woods and the fairies. But that's all, and ask me no more about my people, nor where I came from, nor where I am going to. I must hold my tongue, and if you would have me speak, I can't—that's all—I can't, and I must only go."

"Did not I say that you were to answer *nothing* but what you pleased? And on this express condition I am going to venture one more question—very trifling—only about a toy, a little string of beads, with, I think, a cross to the end of it. It ain't a necklace, is it? I saw it quite accidentally—will you tell me what it is?"

"No, I'll not tell that—nor nothing; I'll hold my tongue about myself, sir, please," she said, with a look of unmixed disdain, and a sudden flash from her splendid eyes. "If you thought 'twas a toy, sir, you'd never have asked. I know what you think—and so you may; but no one will pick out from me more than I choose to tell, and no gentleman will try."

"Well, I did think it something more. I was wrong to ask. Won't you make it up? I did wrong."

"I was wrong too, sir, to speak so quick to you, that has been so good to me. I'm sorry, sir."

"You'll give me your hand; it is all forgiven then, is not it?"

She did give him her hand, with a sigh. Grief is everywhere, like the air about us, though we don't see it; and pain is coursing through its allotted channels, like the blood, though it throbs concealed!

CHAPTER XI.

LOST AND FOUND.

THAT NIGHT William smoked his pipe into the chimney, as usual. The girl, for a wonder, seemed out of spirits. William talked, but only old Martha answered; and when the time came, he wished all

"Good night," and went away to his study. The guest bid her "Good night" also, and departed to her room; and Martha Gillyflower, being now alone, made some final arrangements in the kitchen, and in a little time, according to her careful custom, knocked at the stranger's door, purposing to go in and take away her candle.

No answer was returned.

"Just her head under her wing, and asleep wi' her, like a bird," said the old woman. But when she went in the girl was nowhere to be seen. The candle was there, but nothing was disturbed or missing except the small bag of scarlet cloth, and the things she had in it when she arrived. Her dark-grey cloak, too, had disappeared from the peg on which it hung beside the door.

"There it is!" said Mrs. Gillyflower, energetically. "See how she serves one! Why, it can't be! There's the bed turned down as I saw it an hour ago. Not a hand to it since—nothing stirred in the room but her cloak and the little red bag. Only her candle's here. I'd say there wasn't a soul in the room but myself to-night. And there's her things gone, and her cloak; and—it may be she's gone to Mall's room, to talk a bit; but I don't think it—I don't."

She hurried away, being, nevertheless, strongly of that opinion.

"Get up, Mall, and help me to look. The lass is gone! Sweetbrier's gone, as sure as you're there! Get up, and don't be ogglin' there like a nofflin'; there's Sweetbriar gane awa', and tale or tidings o' her nowhere."

"Agoy!" exclaimed the lass, blinking and staring in wonder, just emerging from her deep first sleep.

"Come—will ye! Huddle yer things on, and come wi' me this minute."

Mall's simple equipment was not long in completing.

"Now, ye look under the bedstocks—I can't stoop so. Well, is she?"

"Na, neyawheere," answered the girl. "She's outen—she's awa', I'm feared."

"Nane o' yer proas, child, but stir and look about ye. She was ever sa keen, but I doubt she is gane, she'd be awa' like that. Stir, lass—'twill be a dull house without her."

They were looking irresolutely about the room, as they stood with their backs to the bedstead; and there came from above, on Mrs. Gillyflower's head, a tap with a little naked foot.

"Well, child?" said she, sharply, to Mall.

"Yes, 'm," answered Mall.

"Well? Is there aught? Is there nout to show or point to? Well, will ye mind how ye're turnin' and knockin' yersel' about?"

"Yes, 'm," answered Mall.

"Ye searched the press, then—so did I, and now ye see——"

Here was another little tap of the same tiny foot.

"Stop that pushin', ye fool!" said old Martha.

"Yes, 'm," said Mall, removing a little from her side.

"And noo ye see what gratitude is! She's let herself out by the scullery-door, and she's gane. She's tae'n hersel' awa' without as much as 'fares-ta-weel,' the fause lass! We'll just gang and see what way she went out, and then I'll to your master in the study, and tell him a'—and I could sit down here and greet!"

Mall looked on the point of "blubberin'," as she termed it, also. At the same moment, the same little foot was laid lightly on the shoulder of Mrs. Gillyflower, who had now turned towards the door.

"Tak yer hand aff my shooder—what's the matter wi' ye?" said the housekeeper, with a proper sense of the liberty—at the same time placing her own hand peremptorily, as she supposed, on Mall's.

"I didn't touch yer shooder, ma'am," began the girl, but was interrupted by a squawl from Mrs. Gillyflower, and

"Darratta! what's that?"

The tiny toes that rested on her shoulder were in her grasp, instead of Mall's fingers. Mall echoed Mrs. Gillyflower's exclamation with a scream, as she beheld the same false hand for a moment on the old woman's shoulder; and she bounced to the door with another bawl, where Martha clutched her with her right hand, hardly knowing what she did, with a "By Jen!" and a prayer.

A laugh—and down jumped the girlish stranger from the top of the oldfashioned low bedstead where she had been hiding.

"Ye did not see my shoes and stockings; I hid them in the bed, and my cloak is up there."

The girl was laughing heartily, and looked so merry and pretty, that if you had been there you would certainly have laughed with her.

"Well!" exclaimed Mrs. Gillyflower, with the indignation of fright. "Of all the turns ye've ever served me, this is the warst!"

What the other ill-turns may have been it would, perhaps, have puzzled our good old friend to recount.

"To think o' yer treatin' me sa! I wouldn't a' believed the parson. Na, na, na—nane o' that," she said, waving off the laughing girl. "Na, na—Iv'e done wi' ye. I did na' think 'twas in ye. What a nafflin' I was, to care tuppence about ye! Ye've sarved me right, and, bout in the way o' civility, I'll never speak word more till ye. I've done wi' ye—I've done wi' ye, quite!"

She had turned with dignity, and her hand was on the door, when the girl caught her.

"No, no—not a bit; ye'll never have done with me. Ye'll kiss me before ye go out, and we'll dance together, you and me; for you're my darling always, and I'll be yours again."

"To think o' ye playin' at peeping-hide, like a child!—there, don't be a fool, let me go—and to give me that fright! Don't ye be holdin me—let go, I desire."

But all wouldn't do. The girl, with bare feet, laughing merrily, and not a bit daunted, pulled her out by the substantial waist, and, singing a merry tune, whisked the old lass round in spite of herself.

"Ye let me go, miss, if ye please—tak' yer hands away. I'm not going; I won't, miss—wer'e na' that intimate."

But on went the song, and round and round sails the good lady, protesting; and the girl—didn't she look roguish, wild, and pretty?—capered such pretty steps on her bare feet, that at last old Martha's dignity broke down, and, perhaps from the very effort to look grave, she burst out laughing, and never was the dance so wild as then.

"I don't care," screamed Martha. "I'm very angry, though I may be laughin'; and I'll tell ye what——"

But her laughter increased, and grew at last so continuous and uproarious, that it was vain contending with it; so giving herself up, she danced with her own goodwill, and set to her pretty partner, with her fat old arms "akimbo," and tears of laughter, in the general chorus, running down her ruddy cheeks. And at last, all laughing, they came to a standstill, and old Martha said, panting:

"Go to bed—I'm the biggest fool o' the whole lot!"

And she gave the girl a kiss on the cheek, and a little slap, and ran out of the room at a trot.

CHAPTER XII.

FORTUNE-TELLERS.

NEXT DAY at eleven o'clock, quite contrary to his bookish custom, William took his rod and flies, and pulled on his huge fishing-boots. Four miles he had to walk before he could cast his flies on the trout-stream; but he had not reached the hedgerow of the first field that lies within the evening shadow of the gables of Haworth Hall, when he heard the sweet voice of the stranger, singing. The song, that came clear from the leafy distance over the field, was the same which he had heard from the wooded slopes by Dardale Moss, and the same rich voice trembled in the air:

"The hawthorn-tree
Is dear to me,
The elver-stone likewise—
The lonely air
That lingers there,
And thought that never dies."

He listened till the song was sung out, and its last sweet and melancholy note died away. And then, with a long sigh, he said:

"I thought so. Yes, I thought the voice was the same, and now I know it. When I heard that song, I knew that I heard the call of fate; I would follow it over the world!"

Lightly he strode to the tall trees and thicket that are grouped at the point from which the song was audible. And now he could see her, though his view was interrupted by the hanging bough that interposed. She was sitting on a stile, leaning lightly on the ivy-grown stem of a great ash-tree, and with a little dog sitting beside her, to which she was talking gaily.

She ceased her prattling on seeing William through the screen of leaves, and as she saw him turn from the path and approach, she stepped down upon the grass.

"I heard your song," said William. "You were sitting on the stile, among that ivy, with that spray of sweetbrier nodding over your shoulders. You see I lost nothing. They call you 'Sweetbrier,' as you won't help them to another name, and I think it so wild and pretty. I shall never ask your real name; when you like to tell me, if ever that time comes, I shall be very happy. I heard your song, and I could not resist turning aside. For, one evening, as I was trudging over the moss, dull and lonely enough, a different sort of fellow from what I have grown to be, I heard that very song before, little knowing what was coming. I love that song, and it makes me sad, and

"'The hawthorn-tree
Is dear to me,
The elver-stone likewise.'

For, when I think of the song, I always see the hawthorn-tree and the old stone where I saw you first; and I'll never forget them, or the song, or that evening. I came just to tell you who has sent me to fish in the Dwyle, four miles away; and I'll go to-morrow, with my gun, across the moss. I'll give up my books—I think I do little good over them now. It is easy to keep one's eyes upon the page, but who will tie the fancy there? And the more I think of it, the more I love the idea of the wild free life. And I'm going all the way, I said, to-day and to-morrow, and every day, thinking of you—just because you told me—just in the hope to please you."

He lowered his voice as he spoke.

"Whatever's best for yourself, sir, you will know. I'm only a poor girl, and can't tell what will answer gentlefolk," she replied, in a low tone, and in that odd grave way, which somehow chilled and, in a manner, awed him.

William's conventual theories had been strengthened by one or two trifles told him by old Martha respecting their guest.

First, on Friday she had eaten no meat.

Secondly, she had described some odd circumstances about the burial of "her sister"—*a* sister, more probably, William thought. A circular piece of silk, bound with ribbons of red and blue, was laid over her heart; a "gospel," or "scapular" (as William concluded), and a white cloth was placed on her feet, and a white cap, of a peculiar shape, on her head; and some of the things that had belonged to her were solemnly burnt. He would have given a great deal for a book, or a learned friend, in his solitude, to satisfy him upon his theory that all this indicated the costume and practice of some conventual order.

And further—proving how little worth was that crucial test which he fancied he was applying—she had told old Martha, with an odd little laugh, that she had never been in a Church-of-England place of worship before, but that "there was no harm in it, for her mother had *once* been in one."

With a dispensation he was satisfied they might go anywhere.

Then there was that in her manner that was very peculiar, when she wished him to understand that he was to stand aloof—something proud, gentle, dignified, which was his very ideal of the nun-like.

"Some time or other, perhaps, you will tell me your name," he said, "but that is a sign you say of confidence, and may be a long way off; but I have an old entreaty to plead again. You called me 'Sir.' Now, if you won't call me by my name, don't at least call me *that;* but why not call me 'Willie,' as Martha does? I'll only ask it when we are alone, just as we are now; and if *I* could make anyone so happy by so slight a thing, why won't you?"

"Well, there—Willie—Willie—Willie," she repeated, very sweetly, with a silence between each time; and there was a little laugh running lowly through it, but something for a moment almost fond in the tone and look.

"You've said it. I thought you never would. I wish I could tell how grateful I am to you. Oh, wonderful stranger! I wish I could see into the future."

She laughed. "Where's the good? Why should the coming time be happier than the past? Rich folks look sour enough often, and lords and ladies ain't always pleasantest."

"I wish I could believe in gipsies," said William. "I'd ride twenty miles to have my fortune told, but I'm not likely to meet them here; they never come this way. You've had your fortune told, I daresay?"

"Well—no," said the girl.

"Well, you've very likely heard others told theirs, and seen the whole thing?"

"Oh, very often," answers she, gaily.

"I wish I could believe in it," said he. "I've heard of very curious things they've told—things that came out quite true—and also what they told people about their past lives. I think you are a believer. How do you think they make it all out?"

"By the planets, and the lines of the hand, and the lines on the forehead."

"Will you tell my fortune?" said William Haworth, smiling.

"I will," said she, quietly. "You cross my hand with silver."

And so he did, still smiling; and she took the coin gravely, and dropping it into her pocket, she took his hand, and held it, looking sometimes for a moment at its palm, and then, long and gravely, in his face.

William would have liked to listen to his fortune so told for the whole day long; and speaking low and fluently, and standing near his side, she said:—

"Although you are young, you have had sorrow, and you sometimes think to yourself it has done you good. You think you are better and wiser than if you had never known grief—d'ye mind what I say? You do not care for a great many people, but them you do like you like well and long. You are very true-hearted—d'ye mind what I say?—and you never were very much in love, but only a trifle; and one was dark, and there was another, with light hair and blue eyes—d'ye mind what I say? But the greatest love's to come yet, and the one that will last all your days—do you mind what I say? But you are very true, and will be married well to a lady that thinks a great deal of you—do you mind what I say?—and is very rich, and you'll come to be a very great man, and you'll have a great estate; and although you think you're going to India, you'll never go there—d'ye mind what I say?—and you'll come to be a great man, here, at home, in England, and you'll live long. And now put your hand in your pocket, and take any money you like in it, and wish—that will do. You will suffer a good deal before three years are over, but after that you will be very happy; and you will see the lady then, for the first time, that you are to marry, and ——"

"That will do; you are breaking down now. You began very well," he laughed, and shook his head. "But, no—I must go to the real gipsies to have my future told. You *did* guess my poor story—my past life—very well; you are so clever, you do everything well; but now you have predicted that which can *never* be—a sheer impossibility. No—I must tell *your* fortune. Let me try—won't you?"

She smiled; for a moment, her little white teeth appeared, and she extended her slender hand, and he took it.

"Cross your hand with silver," said she, and she restored William's shilling.

So he held her hand, and he looked in her face—looked in her face, and held her hand—in a dream. Never was man so near speaking madness, but he did not:—

"You are a young lady, who parted with her nearest relations on earth, to find nearer in heaven, and who discovered, almost too late, that she had forsaken friends for tyrants, hope for despair, and liberty for a prison. You can repeat more Latin on your knees than many a Cambridge or Oxford man can upon his feet. You have discovered that silence is not quiet, nor solitude content. You found that you had exchanged a mother for a stepmother, and a home for a penitentiary. You have yielded more duty and found less love, and you have grown more wise and less patient. You have turned away in time from a dark and cruel mistake, and returned to light and duty. There are many people who admire you, and feel an interest in you, and there is one who loves you—a poor fellow, very lonely, not very happy, very little worth a thought or care of yours, except for that. He loves you—he thinks that no such creature ever saw the light before; he would lay down his life for you, and he holds your little hand in his, and he is where he would always be—by your side."

"You've told my fortune all wrong, sir," she said, withdrawing her hand; "it is all as far away as the sea."

What was it in that tone and manner that was so magical? To him it seemed that an invisible curtain had dropped between them. No vulgar airs, no toss of the head, no affected scorn, were there. Nothing could be quieter, more gentle, sadder even; her head was high, but her eyes were lowered. All was proud, cold, melancholy. Nothing was there in tone or look the least unkind, yet what could be more peremptory?

He had promised there should be no such talk. He had broken his word, and she had called him "Sir." He was horribly confounded and ashamed, and full of silent self-reproach.

"I've broken my promise. I've done very wrong. I've talked like a fool, but you must make it up. You'll shake hands—won't you—and say we are friends again?"

"Oh yes, sir," she said, and they shook hands and parted. And William went away with a heart beating fast—troubled.

Chapter XIII.

THE BLACK PULLET.

"When will Mrs. Gillyflower come home?" asked the stranger.

"Oh, by nightfall."

"Well, and you say the master will be home by sunsetting too. The shadows are stretching, lass, and the air a little sharp; the Squire will be a hungry man by the time he comes back. What have ye for his supper?"

It was the red round of beef, and potatoes—dinner and supper, all in one.

"Come, we'll give him a better supper than that—a bit of hot meat. Go you and kill a fowl."

The girl protested, in her broad north-country patois.

"Go, Mall—do as I bid ye," repeated the guest.

"She'll be stark starin' mad!" expostulated Mall.

"Go you and kill the fowl; I'll take the blame myself; there shan't a wry word fall on you."

"But," reasoned the girl, "it should a' bin killed; it would be too soon to roast it."

"He'll not be home for three hours. Leave that to me. I'll show you how to dress it—and he'll say he never eat one half so good before. Go you—talk no more, but kill the fowl; and come back quick to me, and I'll tell you what to do next."

There was a cool high tone here that Mall, somehow, could not disobey.

Never was cooking so odd. So very strange, indeed, was the process that I had better describe it.

Mall, indeed, expostulated—sometimes in profound anxiety as to what would follow when Mrs. Gillyflower, having returned, discovered the unauthorised slaughter of the pullet—and then aghast at the astounding directions imposed by the damsel who had taken the command of the kitchen in the absence of old Martha. Sometimes Mall would stand agape, and gasp "Agoy!" or "By Jen!"

Sometimes, half frightened, she would look perplexed, in her face—thinking that their eccentric guest had gone stark daft—and sometimes bursting into irrepressible screams of laughter, till, as she said, she "clean kinkt wi' laughin!" She lost all power, for a time, either to resist or to obey.

This curious procedure took place, to make it odder still, not in the kitchen, but in the little field, close to the gate of the yard, under the trees, in the open air.

The imperious beauty there compelled Mall to scoop out a little hollow in the ground with a spade. In this she kindled a fire of peat and sticks. That done, she ordered Mall, aiding herself with great solicitude, to twist a strong rope of straw.

The next step reduced Mall, with sheer convulsions of laughter, almost to a fainting condition. The bird, with all its feathers on, was wound up in this straw-rope, so that nothing but a sort of ball of straw appeared. It was next covered up in the hot ashes, which had by this time accumulated in the hole, and the peat and wood fire was heaped up, round and upon it. After this she made Mall take the potatoes she had washed for boiling, and, instead of placing them in a pot, carry them out to the fire in the field; and there she buried them—one here, another there—in the embers, in serene contempt of Mall's terrified expostulations and screams of laughter.

"And mind ye, I cook the dinner to-day; and if I see your potato-pot on the fire, I'll break it with one whack of the poker; and ye'll do just as I bid ye, neither more nor less, Mall Darrell."

When these preparations were accomplished, the young lady's solicitude seemed at an end, and she was able to converse on indifferent matters with her accustomed passion or levity.

She sat down on the grass near the fire, now a glowing smouldering heap. She had the dog and the cat out to keep her company (for she loved pets), and the cage of the bullfinch on her knee; and to these companions she talked and whistled, while Mall made her more rational dispositions in the kitchen.

Then the girl would return to have a peep at the bonfire, and fall again into shrieks of laughter. And the young priestess of this strange sacrifice would make her sit down on the grass beside her; and she would sing her a song, or tell her a story of a murder in Epping Forest, or of two horses and a tipsy dealer drowned one snowy night in a flooded ford, or of the woman's ghost that was seen nursing and fondling the neglected child in the lonely tent. She grew into great spirits—wild spirits—beside this extemporised fire, and sang again and danced on the grass; and after a time, on a sudden, she grew sad, and she said:

"If we did right, Mall, we'd let that poor little bird go." She had the cage again on her knee, by this time, and was looking through the wires at the bird.

"Hoot, lass! I's no sa awpy as firtle in any such lids. If Mrs. Gillyflower came home, and found her wee bird fleed—woe werth Mall! Be ma sang, she'd be stark beside hersel'!"

Mall, having seen the holocaust of the fowl, believed the strange girl capable of anything.

"I like pets—all my people do. I had a squirrel called 'Jacka,' and a green parrot; it died, poor little thing, and I buried it near Wyndale, in Derbyshire, under the middle tree of the three hawthorns that grow on the moor's side, just at the turn of the brook. I was sick crying after it. Lussha Lee had a pet fox, that frightened it, I think, and it died. It would call me by my name; and it slept every day on its stick, after its dinner, not with its head under its wing, but just like an old gorgio, and its chin on its breast. I'd have a parrot for a pet, or any outlandish bird that don't live wild here; but these small things, when they see their companions and the green leaves, don't you believe but their little hearts is sore—they're looking for the old life? And, Mall, will ye miss me when I'm gone? I'll be often thinking of ye all, and the pleasant fields of Haworth."

"Ye're no gangin' yet, lass, and I'll no greet till sorrow comes," said Mall, heartily.

The stranger laughed kindly.

"Hark!—hear! The birds are all singing. The chimney shadow is away as far as Hazelden wolds; and Mrs. Gillyflower will be coming home again, and then the Squire. Is all ready, lass? Run and see, and trim the fire; the frost is coming, and all is ready here."

And with the tip of her strong but tidy shoe she poked the edge of the ashes.

Mall had hardly returned, when Mrs. Gillyflower appeared; and her handmaid's heart sunk, as she thought of the murdered pullet and the unboiled potatoes, and saw Martha, who was not to be trifled with, descend from the taxcart before it reached the yard-gate, and cross the low stile, and stump over the sward towards the smouldering bonfire.

"Now mind, ye sid ye wod na let her flite me," whispered Mall, in awful trepidation.

"Never you fear," said the girl; and before Mrs. Gillyflower had quite reached them, the stranger called:

"I'm glad ye're come home, ma'am; there has been sad doings. What do you think? Somebody has stolen the black pullet, Mrs. Gillyflower—what do ye think o' that?"

"Stolen the black pullet!" echoed Mrs. Gillyflower, coming to a standstill, and looking herself as black as the pullet.

"Tell her it's there—can't ye?" whispered Mall, in her agony.

"Ay, burnt to a cinder; why, it's all a-fire, ye fool, like a bit o' peat!" whispered the stranger, scornfully.

"Ay! it's gone—ay, the black pullet (blacker than ever)" she said, aside to Mall.

"And what's the fire here for?" exclaimed Mrs. Gillyflower, breaking again into speech.

"We were terrible cold, ma'am."

"And why not sit be the kitchen-fire—what's the matter wi' ye all?"

"Why, Mall let it out, and we were almost famished. The cat's come out, and the dog, and the bird even."

"La! But, ma'am——" broke in Mall.

"And whaar's the pittayties for supper?" gasped Mrs. Gillyflower, with her hand pugilistically raised, and a stamp of distraction. "Whaar's the pittayties?"

"Well," said the stranger, "I do suppose they're where they were, for there's none in the pot, though I told her she'd get into a row about them—I did."

"Aw! la! Look at ye—weel!" broke out the betrayed Mall.

"The black pullet gone, and narra pittayta!" exclaimed the old lady, with both her open hands thrown back in distraction. "If I had a souple-jack in my hand, wouldn't I ken whaar to lay it. Don't ye stand there ogglin' like a gowk, ye strackle-brain'd scollops! Not a word out o' yer head. I'll hae nane o' yer miff-maff here. Sarts! it's bonny doins; fires out, and narra pittayta, and the best pou't o' the lot stole, and you sittin' here croodlin' in a scog! By my sang! it's a good bevellin' ye want, and if I had a widdy in my fist, yer worse than nothin'. There's the master comin', and wet and cold, and not a spark o' fire in the study. If ever there was a rue-bargain, you're ane; woe werth the day I saw yer foolish face! I can't wait noo, but I'll be talkin' to ye i' now."

And with a florid complexion and angry brow away trotted she, to see after the Squire's fire.

"He is coming—I see him down yonder by the hedge. See his flies, they're caught in the bush," said the stranger. "Sit you here, while I run in for the things."

Away she ran, leaving Mall confounded and sore at the treatment she had received. And in a minute more she returned, with two dishes and two tin covers, and a great knife and fork, and a huge cloth.

First from the glowing ashes forth came the potatoes, cased in their hard-baked skins, like roasted chestnuts; and well rubbed in the cloth and placed in the dish, did ever potatoes look so tempting?

Mall began to feel happier. Next, in its thick black crust of burnt straw and feathers, emerged the fowl. Off came this crust, and never had Mall seen or dreamed of so savoury and appetising a dish as was now before her.

"By Jen!" gasped Mall Darrell, with a broad grin, and eyes jumping out of her head.

"Didn't I tell you to do just as I bid you, and all would be well? And I told you to kill the black pullet because Mrs. Gillyflower was thinking this morning she'd a' killed it, only she thought it would not a' been a cold evening, but I knew better. Come, you bring in the pullet, and I'll bring the potatoes, and ye'll see how pleased she'll be."

And so she was, and forgave them both; and laughed and wondered, and wondered and laughed, and called the black-eyed stranger a "naughty pack;" and she told William the history of that eccentric cookery—how it was done in a bonfire, in a nook of the hedge, by the big ash-tree, under the open sky.

Nothing better was ever eaten: epicures would do well to try it.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE KNIGHT IN THE SADDLE.

NEXT MORNING it was Tuesday—the fair-day of Willarden. William had boasted to his young guest that he would take his gun, and walk half round the moss, in search of game.

Instead of doing this, at daybreak he mounted his horse, and rode away toward the old Northumbrian town of Willarden.

There was a light and pleasant autumnal frost in the air as the sun rose over the landscape, and showed sharply for a while the distant peaks of the fells of Golden Friars. The Squire was riding away from Haworth, and the scenery before him was wild and picturesque. Long stretches of light sward, with grey rocks peeping through, and masses of fern and furze, made a breezy undulating outline—steep enough at times, and relieved every here and there with groups of dwarf oak, and birch, and thorn.

This scenery, though never beautiful, is always cheery, and sometimes even pretty. To William it seemed prettier than it had ever looked before. What way ever seemed dull to the man whose head is full of the beautiful imagery of romance, and who is speeding, in the way of his knight-errantry, on the service of his ladylove?

Exploit more foolish, passion more romantic, never animated the enterprise of gallant knight, in the days of prowess and beauty, than that which the breast of the Squire of Haworth harboured, as he rode over the wide plain that separated his hall from the fair-green of Willarden. We shall see how he sped.

As you approach Willarden, the character of wildness and loneliness, which gives its peculiar charm to the scenery, does not diminish. Wide slopes and gentle hollows swell and dip softly, showing shallow scaurs of grey rock here and there, traced in broken lines, like timeworn and fantastic battlements and fortifications; and through the crannies twisted hawthorn-trees stoop wildly, and birch-trees in twos and threes crown their summits.

These picturesque but hungry pastures, with their thin close grass and wavy fern, and hoar rocks peeping through, are browsed by scattered sheep of some old Northumbrian breed, small and agile, who seldom lie down to repose, like their fatter cousins of the South—can gallop far and lightly, and climb the rocks like goats. These sheep crop diligently the thin but sweet herbage which more highly-bred animals would despise, and are doubtless the descendants of those harried animals who made so many forced marches, this way and that, across the border, and saw the steel caps, lances, and shaggy ponies of the Scottish rievers.

And now, at last, the quaint little town of Willarden appears in view, as William Haworth reaches the summit of a long low undulation.

There four narrow roads meet—or, if you will, two long lines of road cross—the little town clumping itself upon and about the point of union. Stone houses, with steep gables, look in the distance as if planted at random, as a child places dominoes. There was some tillage near; corn stood in stooks and stacks, orchards and gardens made an irregular girdle about its walls; and the grey spire, with its gilded vane, glimmered pleasantly in the early sun, with a background of statelier foliage.

Cattle and carts were still pouring into the town as William approached, and the picture, without the sounds of bustle, was pleasant in the distance.

As you draw near, the scene loses something of its gentler charm, and that which was a picture becomes instinct with the character and vulgarity of actual life. Now you hear laughter and bawling and women's prattle, the cries of the cattle-drovers. There are a few late carts and waggons making their way through Church Street to the fair-green. Cows are driving this way and that, with their horns low, on the same route; and sheep and horses and pigs are still moving in the same direction.

William draws bridle at the porch of the "Goat in Boots;" people are going in and out through the crowd, and two broad fellows, whom William has to shove asunder, already deep in a bargain about three cows. They both look shrewd and dogged—I wonder which will have the best of it. On such days, with the flurry and flush of excitement all about, who would recognise the silent little inn of all the rest of the year?

William is lucky to find a nook in which to eat his breakfast.

A fat hearty fellow, with a shrewd hale face, wearing leather breeches and topboots, a long red waistcoat, and a blue cut-away with brass buttons, clapped his big hand on William's shoulder, with a grin, and greeted him with a salutation:

"Ech! Willie Haworth—is thou here, lad? And how's a' wi' thee? Thou's summat late, though. I a' selt my kye weel, an hour sin'."

And he laughed and wagged his head.

"Glad to see you, Dick. Mind you come down again this winter to Haworth, to the duck-shooting. I'll have your corner by the fire, and your pipe and your mug ready; and you'll stay a week, and bring your retriever, the best dog I ever saw—and I'll take no excuse. So that's settled."

Dick laughed a huge laugh. "Maybe—who kens?" he responded joyously. "Thou's sellin' or buyin'?" he inquired, thinking that the young Squire might be pleasant to deal with either way.

"No; I have no business here except to look after a rogue."

"Agoy! Weel—what more?" said Dick.

"Only, as you've nothing better to do, you'll come with me and see the fun. I'm going to send him out o' the county, and he won't like it; and there will be a jolly row, I daresay."

"Thou's a justice, noo. Thou'll be givin' him a jerkin' o' stean. One raggard the less. I'll lend ye a hand, but there's constables if need be, and thou'll hev the warrant in thy pocket."

"Come then, Dick. We'll go down to the fair-green; I like your company—that's a glorious cudgel you've got!"

"Well, it do drive connily; a skelp o' that wud make yer lug sing."

"So I think. Come, let's be off."

So down Church Street the Squire of Haworth and Dick Hoggen the yeoman—a man of cattle, money, and mark in those regions—made their way; and over the narrow bridge, with its now roofless guard-tower, and so into the pretty fair-green of Willarden.

CHAPTER XV.

COWPER.

HERE WERE, of course, the proper scenery and furniture of a fair-green—tents and booths, merry-go-rounds, "Aunt Sally," wheels of fortune, Rocks of Scilly, thimblerig and stacks of gingerbread, and horses and other quadrupeds. The "Step in, ladies and gentlemen!" of the polite showman, resounded, and the milder invitation, to the peep-show, and the jokes of Mr. Merryman; the big drum and trumpet thundered, the merry squeak of the fiddle was heard, and the stentorian "saucy Arethusa" of the two British sailors, in the usual mutilated condition of that gallant service, mingling now and then with the screaming of a refractory pig. All these sights and sounds failed to divert William from his purpose. He carried about with him two remarkable and very distinct pictures. He was looking about sharply for the originals, and was so absorbed in his search as to lose much of Dick Hoggen's agreeable conversation.

His scrutiny was not rewarded. It was now twelve o'clock. I don't know how it is now, but in those days there was a toll collected at the entrance to the fair-green. To the man who received this money William put some questions.

To the best of his recollection he had seen no such men that day; and certainly no such person as the tall young man whom William described had brought a grey and a chestnut horse into the fair.

William was disappointed. He and his friend Dick strolled up again to the "Goat in Boots," and had some luncheon. On a sudden a direful thought dawned on the young Squire's mind.

What if these two miscreants had been spying out his plans, and in his absence had made a descent upon Haworth Hall, and carried off his ladylove—to be immured, perhaps, in a convent? Who could say where Clinton might be, with the farm to look after? Possibly two miles away, at the forge! What an awful fool he (William Haworth) was! He had left her, in fact, to the protection of an old woman and a simple girl, with two wily kidnappers on her track. If they happened to have found a clue to her present refuge, how frightful might prove the consequences of his blunder!

It was now one; he told the people to saddle his horse forthwith, but, on second thoughts, he resolved to visit the fair-green once more, in quest of the villains whom he had come in pursuit of.

And now, it was past one o'clock. Dick Hoggen—who had played at most of the games on the green, had his fling at Aunt Sally, and peeped into the shows—was now for mounting and overtaking the sheep he had bought, which were already some way on their march to Crink Farm.

"Come down once more to the green, Dick; and if there's still no news of my rogues, we'll say good-bye."

So down they went, and at the gate the man told William: "There has been a grey and a chestnut in since, and a tall greyhoundy chap, gipsy-like, wi' em."

"Thank you," said William, with a pleasant nod; "I'm looking for a grey. Which way did he go?"

"Right in—right forrut—right atort the middle o' the green. I've no kennin noo, though—there's such a jummlement here."

"Thanks," William smiled, and nodded again.

He nodded and smiled, but there was the sudden thrill and suspense of coming battle at his heart—he had resolved on an exploit. His eye, as it searched the crowd, was brighter, his face paler and sterner, his step more resolute, and in a sudden silence his talk with honest Dick came untimely to an end.

On reaching a part of the green a little less crowded, he saw a figure—the most barbarous, perhaps, he had ever seen before on English ground; he thought he recognised the outline which his guest had given him—he had found his game.

This was an old square man, with the swarthiest face he had ever seen, broad-furrowed and forbidding, with long soot-black hair, a thick lock of which was brought straight down at each side before his ears. He had jet-black large eyes, the fire of which was sinister in sockets so lined and wrinkled. He wore a high-crowned broad-brimmed felt hat, such as Germans sometimes affect; he had a short chocolate-coloured coat, and a skyblue waistcoat—both faded and worn at the seams—and a pair of trousers, the lower parts of which were thrust into a pair of old topboots, which, in deep brown wrinkles, hung lower than the calves of his legs.

This strange figure, pacing up and down a short bit of sward, was totally alone, and twisting an oak cudgel, of about a yard long, by the middle—semed without object or occupation.

A stranger or more savage figure he had never seen. It might have been taken for a Zamiel, or the smoked idol of some infernal worship, or a child's ideal of an ogre.

"Keep beside me now," said William Haworth to his friend; "I may want to borrow your cudgel."

"I say, Cowper!" cried William.

The swarthy old man turned on his heel, and, stopping short, confronted the young Squire, fixing on him his glare from under his savage brows. At the same time he shifted his hold of his cudgel, and planted the end of it on the ground.

"Ho! who wants me?—I'm Cowper," said he, in a hard loud voice.

"Where's the young fellow that came with you?" said William. "I'm told he has horses to sell, and his grey might answer me."

"You'll see 'em there," said the old man, indicating the direction with a prod of his cudgel.

"Where?—in a booth?"

"Ye can see a grey horse in daylight, I expect."

William laughed. "I'll try," said he.

"On this ground a man and his nag won't be far apart," growled the man with the cudgel. "The lad will be having a pot o' swipes, mayhap."

And the old fellow turned again, swaggered up and down his beat once more, twirling his cudgel in the same singular fashion.

Chapter XVI.

LUSSHA SINFIELD.

Richard Hoggen had grinned with much interest over this brief dialogue, and accompanied William with right goodwill, as he made his search for the man with the horses.

Coming round the corner of a booth suddenly, a tall bony slender fellow, riding a chestnut horse and leading a grey, was before them.

He was a handsome young man, very swarthy, with oval face, lowering forehead, black eyes, and black hair: about his neck, in a single tie, so that its ends hung loose and long, was that green-and-red handkerchief which he had noted in the description. He wore a wideawake hat, a grey coat with gilt buttons, a good deal worn at the seams, a red waistcoat, white corduroy knee-breeches, and brown leather gaiters.

William made a step forward and raised his hand; the man pulled up.

"Selling that grey?" asked William

"Ay—d'ye like him?" said the man.

"Can't say till I look at him. Old Cowper told me I should find you about here. You're Lussha Sinfield, ain't you?"

"Ay," said the man, boldly, but he eyed them suspiciously. "I'm the man. All the world's welcome to look at me, and the horse too. Nothing to hide: he's a beauty!"

"Has he been hunted?"

"Half last season; a lamb to handle—a devil to run. Jumps all slick—bar, ditch, or stone-wall, all one to Faa; takes all sweet; beautiful trained. Look at his hoofs—just like a marble. Never made a mistake since he was dropped. Pedigree, points, action, training—not another's been on this turf this six year like him. Try him yourself—you know a horse. Will ye come a bit this way?—and Mister Cowper will hold the chestnut."

It was really a nice horse, William thought, with fine action. But he was not troubling his head much about horses. His business was of another sort.

"Well, come on, it's close by," said William, pointing toward the spot where he had left the old swarthy savage twirling his cudgel.

As they walked on, William Haworth's companion jogged him under his ribs, and mumbled his critical remarks on the horse, into his ear: a caution upon this point, a hint upon that, but a general admission that "the beast was no' that bad." And all the time the horseman, with his lids dropped, as if he was looking at the grass at his horse's hoof, was reading, through the long fringe of his eyelashes, with a practised skill, the countenances and bearing of these two friends, and he truly saw in William's that which dissatisfied and even alarmed him.

But Lussha Sinfield knew very well how he stood. "He need not care a curse for anyone." He had little secrets, of course, of his own—something more than most men, but they were secrets. There was nothing that could turn up about him. "He did not care a d——n."

Cowper was now in sight, and he beckoned to him.

"Take the halter," said he quietly, and Cowper—than whom, as I have said, no fitter representative for the forest-demon in "Der Freyschütz" ever strode on earth—took the rope in his hand.

William Haworth was standing a little away, so as to take in the whole figure of the horse.

"He stands over his knees," says William.

"A good judge would think that a perfection, rather than otherwise," answered Sinfield, coolly.

"I take leave to think differently," says William, sharply.

"Every man to his taste," says the dealer, coolly.

"And, besides that, I think his shoulder too straight for a hunter, and his hind-legs too far away from him."

"If those points were better than they are," answers the man, with a scornful smile, "I'd be asking a hatful more than ninety pounds for him. But never mind that—the proof of the pudding is in the eating. You'd better see him over a few fences."

"I don't mind," says the Squire.

"Hollo, Jonnie!" cries the man, raising his arm, and a slight boy, black-eyed and black-haired, with dark-brown skin, runs up to his side.

"That's a gipsy lad," says Dick Hoggen, struck by the peculiar physique of the boy.

"By my soul, he's not!" answers Sinfield, fiercely. "That's a clever boy, though. Now, Jonnie, take him over that bar."

A few steps brought them to the bar. The little fellow sits light as a fly on the horse's back, and, without fuss or excitement, the horse goes over.

"That will do; and what do you say to that double ditch?" says William, pointing to the fence of the fair-green close by them.

"Take him over that," says Lussha Sinfield to the boy, and the horse goes over the fence.

"What do you say to that? You saw how he changes his legs," said the dealer.

"He goes out of his tracks," says William.

The man answers with a derisive laugh.

"Take him over that again," he says; and over goes the horse.

"Bring the horse down here a bit, to the wall," says Sinfield. "Now take him over the wall for the Squire."

And over the wall he goes.

"See that!" cries Sinfield.

"What?" says the Squire.

"What!" echoes Sinfield. "Why, how he stands out, and sails over it. What! Ha—ha!"

"I say it's bad jumping," says William, coolly; "why, he runs under, and bucks over. A hunter, you say!"

"That gentleman there," says Sinfield, pointing to Dick, and beginning to lose temper, "has an eye in his head, and knows what belongs to a horse. What do you say, sir?"

Dick screwed one eye close, and looked hard at the horse with the other. The dealer was on the point of citing the old distich:

> "Who winks with one eye and looks with the other,
> I would not trust him though he were my brother."

He did not quite know what to make of them, so, on the whole, he chose to try a little longer.

"Take him over the wall again," said Sinfield. And over went the grey, as before.

"Will ye try him?"

"I don't mind," answered William.

He mounts, and excited the horse with whip and spur, and gallops him round the empty upper end of the green, and pulls him up suddenly before the seller, who is growing angry.

"What the d——l do you mean by bucketing my horse about that way?"

"D——n it! you asked me to try him, didn't you?"

"I didn't tell you to drive him mad, and knock him about that lick—did I? And what do you say to him, after all that?—what do you say now?"

The Bird of Passage:

A STORY OF A FIRST LOVE.

By J. SHERIDAN LE FANU, Author of "Uncle Silas,"
"A Lost Name," etc.

Chapter XVII.

MEASURE WEAPONS.

"Well, what do you say? What will you take?" said William Haworth.

"He's dog-cheap at a hundred guineas. I'll say ninety, and not a penny under."

The man was holding the horse's head; horse and man were fine types of their several species.

William laughed, quietly and scornfully.

The man fixed a fiery stare on him. "Ay, and what do you say?" he asked.

"What do I say? I've a good deal to say. You are Lussha Sinfield, and I've heard enough about you to help me to value your horse. I've no doubt he's a cheat, and five pounds is too much for him;" and William laughed again contemptuously.

Sinfield turned pale under his swarthy skin; his brow lowered darker, and fire gleamed from his black eyes on William. He stands without motion for some seconds, like the statue of an evil spirit.

"You d——d gorgio!" he yelled, "you haven't five pounds in the world."

And, stamping, he broke into an extravagance of fury, of shrieking curses and abuse, gesticulating as if he was hurling handfuls of dust at William into the air. The effect of this frantic exhibition was increased by the rearing and plunging of the startled horse, which he held with his left hand by the bridle, which forced him to caper and spring, this way and that, by its struggles.

"Take the horse, and give me the cudgel!" he shouted to Cowper.

"Lend me your cudgel, Dick," said William to his companion, who was utterly puzzled by the mad scene, and at the same time he grasped the weapon.

"A ring—a ring!" shouted the crowd, that had already begun to collect.

"Ay, a ring," cries William Haworth, sternly. "I'll fight that fellow, if he dares; I'll drive him out of our county."

"Will ye try the cudgel, ye d——d thief?" screamed the horse-dealer.

"Ay, I don't care."

Sinfield made a spring into the air, and twirled the heavy stick he held by the middle; then off went his coat and his waistcoat, and old Cowper rolled them tight together, and strapped them to the saddle; off went Sinfield's hat, and off went his green-and-crimson handkerchief, which he tied instead tight about his small black head. There stands the handsome athlete, with this bright headgear, in his shirt and "shorts" and gaiters, looking so lowing and malignant.

He made his stick spin in the air as his black eyes gleamed on William. Light, long of limb, all bone and sinew, a very formidable adversary looked this champion, who had killed his man in fair fight with the selfsame tough bit of ash, and left his mark scarred on many a valorous youth—being, in fact, a highly skilled master of that weapon.

Every fellow who has not seen good single-stick play fancies he can guard himself and hit another well enough to hold his own in a fight, and feels safe enough if he has a good stick in his hand. A little experience will open his eyes, if it does not close them.

"I back myself to win—five pounds," said Lussha Sinfield.

"Done!" cried William.

"I'll make it ten," rejoined Sinfield.

"Done, again!" said William. "We'll stake the money with Mr. Hoggen, here—Mr. Richard Hoggen; everyone knows Mr. Hoggen."

"Aye, he'll do: I've heard tell of Mr. Hoggen."

"You'll hold the stakes, won't you, Dick?" asked William.

"I don't mind," said Dick; "but canst play?—Have a care what you're doing," he whispered, with a wink.

"Well, I ought to know something about it; I was the best man at school at it, and, so far as I know, the best at Cambridge. I was worth something, I can tell you, in the town-and-gown rows; I used to knock them over like ninepins."

"Well, I'll take the money," said Dick; "and we'll keep a ring clear. Hollo! Dobbs!—Heyward!—Clewson! Come, lads, ye must keep a ring; get half-a-dozen more, and keep fair-play. Here be the Squire o' Haworth goin' to play a bout for the honour o' the old county!"

Sinfield said a word to his comrade, taking the horses himself by their heads; and Cowper strode up to Dick Hoggen, and, with extended arm, held forth a £10-note, which honest Dick took, with a careful scrutiny, folded, and, with ten sovereigns which William Haworth handed him, placed in his purse, and stuck into the lowest depth of his breast-pocket.

"Now, mind ye don't press in," said Richard Hoggen, addressing the crowd. "If you don't keep the ring you'll spoil the fun, and stop the sport; and see, lads, the two foremost rows mun sit a t' ground."

William Haworth now threw off his coat, handed his watch to honest Dick Hoggen, and put off his waistcoat and hat; and instead of it, like his antagonist, tied a handkerchief tight about his head.

"Now we mun mezzur t' sapplins," said Dick; and on being placed together there was scarcely, as it turned out, a quarter of an inch difference in the length of the two sticks; and having satisfied himself that there was no loading in Sinfield's, he pronounced the cudgels fair, and restored each to its owner for the occasion.

The ring was already formed; an ample area of smooth short turf awaited their tread, and the north-country folk who were lucky enough to be on Willarden Fair Green that day were about to see some very pretty play.

Chapter XVIII.

LOST AND WON.

"Now, mind ye," said Dick, in a loud voice, "I'm goin' to tell ye how the play mun be. It shan't last o'er an hour; and, won or drawn, it ends then. Every ten minutes I cry '*Over!*' unless the play's hot at the time, and then the players take five minutes' rest. An' if one tak's a skelp o' the other, and when time's ca'd he can't be up and to't, he's bet; but an' if it's a banger over t' head, en he's floor'd, he has ten minutes' rest, in place of five, to cum till himsel'. En noo, is beath pleased?"

"Ay!" cried Sinfield.

"All right!" said William.

"Weel, then, blitely lads, lig intul to't, noo!" shouted the yeoman, lifting his hand for a sign.

And, each eyeing his adversary closely, the two combatants stepped cautiously from opposite sides, with cudgels well-poised, towards one another.

And now the cudgels cross, and now come a few quick feints, and each player shows something more of caution. Each has formed, I suspect, a higher estimate of his antagonist.

William Haworth's face is stern; he is heart and soul in the battle. Victory is more to him than anyone dreams; it is everything to him; he would sell Haworth, I am sure, to secure it. Pale with an intense anxiety, and stern, looks the blue-eyed Saxon Squire. His swarthy adversary, on the contrary, grins merrily, showing under his lowering brow and fiery eyes white rows of small teeth.

That fellow has the tricks of a prizefighter—this smiling or grinning for the groundlings, a trick to maintain confidence, and ape good-humour. He has often played for money, one would conclude. The odds are awfully against the amateur.

Now comes a sudden break in this cautious play, and with beautiful rapidity cuts and parries whistle and rattle; and a heavy blow takes the horse-dealer across the leg, another at his head is parried, and he replies swiftly, and is met, in return, by a parry. They draw back a little, and the swarthy fellow laughs with all his glittering teeth.

Dick Hoggen looks at his watch, which is nestled snugly in his hand; it wants two minutes and a half still of the time at which he is to cry "Over!" His confidence in William has revived; and, judge of the lists though he be, he would like to call the five minutes' rest, during which that resounding cut across the dark fellow's leg, just above the knee, would possibly stiffen, and spoil his action.

But there remain two minutes still, and suddenly the dark fellow advances, and a very pretty and fierce bit of play follows instantly. "Click-clack—click-clack," with sightless speed and force the strokes and guards fly and meet. The ten minutes are up, but the play is at the moment too "hot" to be interrupted, in accordance with the articles.

The two minutes have passed, and on a sudden, with the sound of a stroke on a well-stretched sail, a single blow ended the "round."

You could hardly have seen who gave it, or where it fell—all was so quick. But instantly William Haworth lay stretched on his back, looking up to the sky with a white sad face, and blood was trickling over his cheek and ear.

Well was it for William that his fall was so instantaneous, for his adversary followed it with a swinging swoop, that might have cut him across the temple, and ended his dream of love and glory.

Thus, by a few inches and a small fraction of a second, he escaped, and folly and passion lived on; though, looking on the young fellow's face, some of the spectators feared he was dead. The cudgels with which they played were quite heavy enough for such a feat.

It was soon evident, however, that the Squire was not in that predicament.

A broken head, pure and simple, is a trifle where the cudgel is a pastime—is no more matter than a broken pipe. William Haworth sat up. His friends stanched the blood as well as they could; and, as he was still giddy, "daddled" him, in Dick Hoggen's phrase, one at each side, across the arena.

Ten minutes' rallying-time, according to agreement, was allowed William Haworth. He needed every second of it.

As William showed signs of recovery, his adversary frequently called to Dick Hoggen, "How's time?"

William was now on his legs, and his friend quietly advised his withdrawing from the contest, and so escaping the "bevellin'" that awaited him.

"I'm all right again—thank you, old fellow. You quite mistake. He's a better man than I thought him, and I was too rash; but I know him now. The lesson was worth a knock; and I go in now to win, you'll see."

Sinfield, on the other hand, talked in an undertone, laughing, as he passed to and fro, to his companion; and the old fellow, fired by the combat and the sight of blood, jabbered fiercely in reply, and looked more horribly ugly than ever.

The fellows who had been sitting round on the grass stood up now, and a loud gabble was going on all round. When order was called, the ring was re-formed; and, after a minute's hurry and hustle, all was right again, and the battle recommenced.

There is evidently more caution on each side. It is plain, after the first slight skirmish, that the Squire of Haworth had suffered nothing in hand or eye by his disaster. It is also plain that the dark fencer, who has drawn first blood, is resolved not to throw away his advantage, but to await his opportunity, and make his victory sure.

The Squire's hurt, oddly enough, proved in the end the cause of his safety. Thus it happened. Sinfield having trifled, and "dodged," and worried, with the intention of tiring a man who had lost some blood and sustained a shock, on a sudden makes a determined and formidable attack, and the Squire of Haworth is sorely pressed—is in danger—five to one, it seems, against him; and Sinfield's smile has vanished, and an atrocious glare and dark pallor unconsciously betray the animus with which he fights.

The people hold their breath; some in the first ranks stand up. Any instant may see the catastrophe, and at this moment Sinfield's foot slips: he has placed it in the little patch of blood which flowed from his adversary's wound. The slight derangement that attends this accident William Haworth avails himself of; and instantly a resounding "skelp," as they term such a blow in the North-country, proclaims to the world that Sinfield's skull has "caught it" this time, and, as he reels, quick almost as you can clap your hands, two others follow, and tall lithe Lussha Sinfield lies, face downward, on the short grass, his small black head and green-and-scarlet handkerchief on his doubled arm, and the cudgel in which he trusted a yard away from his open hand.

The crowd had now closed in about the fallen man; and foremost among the gabbling faces were the silent heads of the grey and the chestnut, pulled over by the powerful old gipsy, who had picked up the cudgel on his way in a trice, and who is violently roaring, stamping, and gesticulating, with the stick and the bridle clenched in his right hand, and the halter in his left; so that the horses are frightened, throwing up their heads and snorting in the air, and in danger of trampling on the feet of the crowd, who are shoving and hustling with them, and bawling to Cowper to mind his horses.

"It's foul!' he is yelling. "He struck the man down!—he struck him foul! I don't care a d——n!—he struck him down! I claim stakes for Sinfield! It's all foul! I'll fight him for double the money, I will, myself!—I'll fight that chap myself, if he's the man!—I'll fight him, double or quits; and Sinfield's winner!—He struck foul! I'll lay my oath to't! Give up the money here; I'll make ye!"

While he is yelling, in the midst of a sort of scuffle, the men about him are threatening and bawling, "Whar gangst thou, dafy?—wilt tramp the lad's feace!" and so forth.

It was a full hour before Sinfield came to himself. In the meantime, Dick Hoggen proclaimed the Squire of Haworth winner of the stakes. William took his own, and said he would let off Sinfield, on condition. He would give him a cheque, payable in three months, adding £2 to it, provided that neither Sinfield nor Cowper appeared in the county for that time. If they did, he would stop payment of the cheque at the bank.

After much shrieking, threats, and bluster, the terms were accepted, Sinfield and Cowper having conferred for a minute apart; and the crestfallen partners, having by good-luck sold the chestnut, set forth on their march northward.

Chapter XIX.

LOOKING EASTWARD.

The battle was over between two and three o'clock. A thin little boy, dark and handsome, who, with great black eyes, had been watching the vicissitudes of the combat with silent interest, got quickly from the fair-green, so soon as the fight was ended, and ran, with a light foot, through the old town of Willarden, and away westward, towards Dardale Moss.

William had left home in the grey of the dawn; and old Martha Gillyflower, talking at breakfast to her guest, said:

"Now, see, if here isn't a cow!" She had whisked round the tea-leaves that remained in the bottom of her cup, and inverted it in her saucer, and was now reading futurity, after the manner of her kind, in the tracing thus made on the sides of her teacup. "A cow. Look here; isn't there one horn, and there the other?—and its tail here? That's what he'll bring home, ye'll find—a cow; and if he does, he mun find room for her in his study, for there's none on the farm. He did the same at Crinkford—half-a-score sheep, without ever a word to Clinton, and more sheep at Haworth than Peter kenn'd what to do wi'."

The girl laughed. "Well, if he brings home a cow, it will be an odd day's shootin'."

"Shootin', child! The first time I heard of a gentleman shootin' at a fair," replied Martha.

"Oh! the fair? What fair?—Willarden?" asked the girl, carelessly, but with a slight change of colour.

"Ay, Willarden. He's not gane there to sell, sa it mun be to buy, I consayte; it will not be the gingerbread and peep-shows that taks him thiddher."

The girl laughed. "Some young lady—a sweetheart, mayhap," said she.

"Na—na. Willie's nane o' that sort; he's too wise. Time enough to court when he's thinkin' to marry, and time enough to marry when he has meyar years o'er his pow, and meyar goud in his poke. He'll no du a' that lids. Na—na; he'll no be thinkin' o' fetchin' hame a marrow to Haworth this monny a year yet; en afoore ony sic like cattle comes hiddher to Haworth, I wish a'ad Martha may be far enough out o' the way."

The girl talked on very merrily. She was in great spirits. But so it was, that when Martha was no longer near, she grew thoughtful and restless, and after a time walked down to the ruin that stands near the road to Willarden, and stood on that eminence looking towards it. It was too early for anyone yet to return from the fair. The narrow old road was deserted. She sat there, looking for a long time. She sang sometimes little snatches of airs, wild and quaint, of which the world knows nothing. Then came intervals of silence, and then, in her low sweet voice, she would talk to the dog, of which she made a pet, as it sat beside her, and then a silent watch again.

Then into the house she would run, and whistle to the bullfinch, or lend a hand in any work that was going on, and make a bit of fun for Mrs. Gillyflower.

"Wi' all your fun, thou's not eatin' a bit. Thou's not well, lass?" asked old Martha, kindly.

"Never better—only I was thinking, Mrs. Gillyflower; and where's the good of thinking? Everything dies—birds, flowers, lads and lasses—all, and sorrow itself dies at last; and so, ma'am, I say, let us not care too much for any, for 'tis only grief, at best; and if you like them well, and their liking dies first, where are ye? So keep your heart sure locked, and the key where none can find it, and your love won't be stole away; and ye'll have a merry mind, and careless days, and light sleep, and ye'll die a good old woman. Shall I sing you the song of the little fiddler that died of love of Willie Faa's big aunt, and was buried on the top of the hill in his fiddle-case?"

So the strange girl sang this song, which affected from first to last a pedantic strain of philosophy, with a tune somewhat monotonous and severe, both of which, contrasted with the irresistibly absurd images and incidents of the tale, made old Mrs. Gillyflower's fat sides shake with laughter.

Away the girl ran again, before the laughter was half over, and was looking eastward once more from the same eminence—watching listlessly sometimes, and sometimes more anxiously, for the distant figure of the returning horseman.

Had she once been satisfied that she saw him, and that he was safe, she would have returned, and the *preux chevallier* would never have known that his return had been so watched for.

Many restless toings-and-froings had there been.

It is now within an hour of sunset, and she hears a whistle, and guesses who is coming. She advances. A little black-eyed boy comes running up the road, that here winds with a picturesque irregularity, and he sees her, and raises his hands. She beckons, in her cold lofty way, and in a moment more he has reached her side.

He has a story to tell. It is related with wonderful gestures and volubility. She stands listening, with her hand extended. They are quite out of sight of the house.

Out comes her little red purse, and she gives the boy some money. He has a word or two more to say. He is going, but she beckons him back again, and has more questions to ask—possibly the old ones over again.

And now she waves him off, and away goes he; and she is alone, looking down on the grass beside her with a pale face.

Chapter XX.

THE NAME.

The girl returned to the house, and talked and laughed as usual. The fuss of preparation for the Squire's return, with a keen appetite after his long ride, was over, and honest Martha was already predicting that the "darkening would come before Willie was heam," and rehearsing the lecture she would give him if so it should be.

The girl laughed. "Is he afraid of you, Mrs. Gillyflower?" asked she, suddenly grave again.

"Why sud he, lass, so lang as he keeps gude hours and gude manners? But he kens weel eneugh he's nobbut to tak' care o' himsel', and Martha's weel pleased."

"Wilful and wayward the young lads be—'taint easy ruling them, ma'am," said her young guest, with the gravity of a sage. "I wonder how half o' them ever lives to thirty year."

"Thirty year!—not they. If they warn't looked after by wiser heads, there wad na be ane o' them left at yan score and twea—wi' couds en fevers, to say nowt of the faws, en clinks, en sizzupers they're gettin' ever an' always."

The concluding items in old Martha's catalogue sounded ominously in the girl's ear, but she laughed again. After a little time, she left the kitchen unnoticed, and passed out of the hall-door.

The renown of Lussha Sinfield was high as a master of the cudgel. She had heard the story of that day's fight. A chance had given William Haworth the victory, but a deadly hand had struck him.

Had not the same hand struck Tinkler Gordon, the Scot, what seemed but a light blow, and the Tinkler seemed never the worse for three whole days, and at the end of that time he sickened, and soon died; and it was found that the tap of Sinfield's skilful cudgel had broken the brawny Tinkler's skull.

In the meantime, William Haworth was riding homeward. The sun was just at the edge of the horizon, and the melancholy glory of evening tinted all the landscape.

As he rode at a walk, the byroad there making a little turn, looking over his right shoulder towards the old house, whose chimneys, now not three hundred yards away, rose over the familiar thorn-trees and elms—upon his saddle, on the left side, a hand was laid, and, with a quick glance, he saw his beautiful guest looking up in his face.

That look was radiant. There was admiration, there was gratitude in it. The Squire drew the bridle instantly, smiling down in return.

I daresay she thought Lussha Sinfield about the most formidable champion on earth. In her proud face was beaming that sympathy with the heroic that makes the beauty of girls almost sublime.

"Willie—Willie—oh Willie!—you're hurt."

"Nothing," he laughed.

"All for me! I'll never forget ye, Willie."

"I say it is nothing. Oh, how I wish it were! I wish I could lay down my life for you," said this romantic Squire, whose chivalry was rising to a wild adoration in the light of her beauty.

She was gazing up at him stedfastly, and speaking in her low sweet tones.

"My man! And all for a poor lass!"

"For my beautiful friend—my fairy-queen—my treasured guest!"

"I'm a proud girl." Suddenly there was a little sob, and a little gush of tears.

Willie was by her side, and caught her hand in both his to his lips.

"No—no, none o' that, Willie," she said gently, but in the old sad way, that was not to be gainsaid. "I'll see to your wound, Willie. I'll cure it myself. We have our own way of curing everything. I will—but oh!—that's nothing."

Willie laughed again, and said:

"It *is* nothing—the hurt is nothing; but—" in a changed tone he said—"but that you should think of me, and care for me, ever so little, is more than all the world and more than life to me."

Gazing in his face, she repeated, as if to herself, with the same melancholy rapture, "My man—my man!"

"If you trusted me better now, if you thought me ever so little worthier, just as a little sign that you do not quite distrust me, you said you would tell me, some time——"

"My name? Oh yes! I will," she said slowly, and very gently. "A strange name you'll think it. Euphan Curraple, that is it. I would not tell it to another here."

"Euphan! It is a beautiful name! I know you ever so much better now, dear Euphan! Oh, Euphan! my only, only love!"

"No—no, Willie; you don't know me better, and you're not to talk so. You gave me your word. You're true-hearted—didn't I say you were?—and you'll keep your word. Get on your horse again, Willie, and no wild talk; but home, and I'll follow the path."

"Well, Euphan, there's a secret between us, isn't there?—a secret in my keeping. Your name. It is only a sign of trust between us. God bless you for it!"

"Come—come, Willie, up and home; they'll wonder what keeps you—they'll be coming."

"Well, Euphan, if I were never to say it more, you are my life and my hope, the star of my worship! Euphan, my darling——!"

"If you were never to say it more, well, never say it more, Willie. Can't we talk like other folk? Can't we be kind without being foolish? We should know one another longer than we are ever like to do, before we can tell truly what's to say the one o' the other. Wide is the world, and many kinds, and chance or change, and nothing stays, some in walls, some under barns, no two songs the same, and some that meets and like, and lose; love passing like a ship at sea and comes no more; and so, Willie, be merry while ye may, lad, and we'll sing while the way lies together, and think after." And with a light sad laugh, the girl waved him toward the house, and herself ran up the little footpath in the same direction, and was lost among the briers and bushes that grow through the clefts of the old grey rocks that peep through the sward as you mount that wild and winding way to Haworth Hall.

CHAPTER XXI.

A CHANGE.

WILLIAM HAWORTH's hurt looked no trifle, but he did not mind it. In the veins of a young fellow in good training, and living in such wild free air, on good country fare, it is not blood but ichor that circulates, and wounds heal in no time.

It seemed to him that the beautiful girl who haunted his thoughts rather kept out of his way—that is, he could never see her except in the presence of old Martha now, or of Mall Darrell. He fancied that she had grown thoughtful.

Certain it was, when he was by she was silent. She was grave. She did not, he thought, even look at him, except when, driven to despair, he spoke to her. Then she spoke gently and pleasantly as ever.

Once only he caught her smiling at some joke he addressed to Mrs. Gillyflower—she smiled at the roses she was arranging in a glass for the dresser—and William felt prouder and happier for half the day.

What could this be? There was no affectation in the matter—there was no appearance of being offended; only you would have fancied that she was under orders to avoid a *tête-à-tête,* and to act with a little more reserve. I need hardly say, however, that there was no one to impose any such conditions.

William tortured himself to find reasons for it. Perhaps the cause was in the rapturous audacity of his talk. She had thought it over, perhaps, and formed resolutions in counsel with herself.

The Squire affected to be careless, sometimes; and was often angry, and always miserable.

He had reviewed his theory of her being an escaped nun. He had another theory now, romantic also. Was ever wight more desperately in love?

She is expecting a letter or a message, and she is meditating her farewell; and she has made up her mind that there shall be no entanglement, even of sentiment.

"How cold and selfish they are!" he said, in his anger. What made it worse still was that he sometimes heard the old sounds of merriment from the kitchen—the laughter and the singing—and this cruel girl was clearly the origin and spring of all the gaiety.

Some girls might have affected this estrangement to pique a lover and make themselves more precious, or even from the mysterious pleasure that some find in an unexplained and smouldering quarrel—the pain and the submission of a suffering lover, his wanderings in the dark, and his pleadings for light.

But William Haworth did not suspect his Euphan of this. He felt that in that character, in some respects so volatile, there was a vein of common sense, decision, and dignity, where the deeper feelings were concerned, quite incompatible with any such shabby trifling.

In this mood, amid these conjectures, William Haworth took his gun, and spent the day in a lonely march over Dardale Moss.

The sun was touching the distant rim of the horizon, as William Haworth, with the butt of his gun over his shoulder, approached the scattered wood near Haworth Hall.

Far away, but still a bold feature in the landscape, are visible the towering fells of Golden Friars. Looking towards them, as you stand under the group of birch-trees, with your back to the sombre moor, the landscape has a wild and melancholy charm of its own, especially in certain lights.

Take sunset, for instance—as it now is—when, red with the mists that gather over that dank expanse, the sun seems sinking inch by inch into its black level, and throws your shadow long before you, touching every weed and thistle and long blade of grass with its fiery light, and with a softer tint lighting up the trees in the near foreground.

Before you stands the old grey-fronted house of Haworth, its small windows now glimmering all over with the reflected flame of the west. About it, with an air of shelter and comfort, stand huge old trees. It is by no means a "palatial residence," as county historians often term ancient family houses. It is a homely old house, shingle-roofed and strongly built; and 200 years hence may find it, looking westward over the moss, with little or no change.

A little in the rear, and crowning an abrupt eminence of very modest pretensions, rise the ruins of Haworth Castle. In this land of raid and rapine, no less than seven such buildings are said to have belonged to the family of Haworth.

In the foreground near the margin of the moss, a little to the right, stands one of those mysterious relics that carry us back to cyclopean times. On a level, no doubt once surrounded by a forest of oak—the indications rather than the relics of which remain in the fragments of dwarf oak-wood which are to be found in that region—stands a Druidic ring of huge stones. Two are prostrate, and two missing—blasted, perhaps, and carted away in fragments to contribute to some neighbouring building. It is, however, on the whole, an imposing and very perfect monument of this rude and mysterious architecture. Within and about this silent and venerable circle—whose origin, when the first stone of that ruinous castle was laid, was a secret as irrecoverably lost as it now is—grow a few hawthorn and elder trees. I suppose it figures in books of topography and antiquarian works. These objects, partially screened by the irregular wood I have described, make the scene picturesque and interesting.

No place is more solitary than this. In Sydney Smith's phrase, "You must here send twelve miles, and over the fells too, for a lemon."

Golden Friars is the metropolis of this stern and somewhat savage region, and, thus placed within the circle of dependency, I may treat this relation as a chronicle of Golden Friars.

It was here, in moonlight, on that stormy night, not yet a fortnight since, that William had first come within the circle of a strange enchantment—when, like a spirit in the solitude, that beautiful girl stood before him. By the same path, as nearly as he could make it out, he now approached these tall time-furrowed stones.

Traversing a thick screen of hawthorn and wild birch, on a sudden this solemn circle stood full in view.

Not among these rude columns, but some twenty yards nearer to the spot where he then stood, on a slight elevation, full in the level light of the red sun, two figures were fixed in attitudes that betokened an engrossing dialogue.

William's step was stayed. He gazed on them, breathless. One was Euphan Curraple—the other was a wonderful stranger.

Chapter XXII.

HECATE.

This stranger was an old woman, dark and grim beyond anything he could have imagined, and resembled nothing that William had ever heard of but the witch of a fairy-tale. Her shoulders were humped with age; her face extraordinarily long and swart, the chin resting on her breast. Her eyes were black and vivid. She wore a very wide-leafed black hat, tied down over her ears with a handkerchief, and a short dark cloak, from the folds of which her brown bare arm was extended; and her fingers, on which were several rings, grasped a long stick, on which she leaned.

Beautiful Euphan leaned with her shoulder, lightly, on the silvery stem of a birch-tree, one of three that sprang forking from the same root; and her arm and slender hand wound on the branch beside her, the small leaves of which waved and quivered slightly in answer to the motion, else unperceived, with which she accompanied her talk. Now and then her narrow shapely foot peeped forth, and listlessly poked the little tufts of grass.

Here, truly, were the embodied types of the graceful and the grotesque—the ugly and the beautiful—contrasted.

The old woman is talking now. The strange mask shines in the setting sun, like burnished bronze.

And now it is Euphan's turn, and William sighs, "How beautiful she is!—how beautiful!"

What a mysterious prettiness, and novelty, and finish in all her movements, when a gesture or a change of attitude accompanies her speech! How strange and sinister the bright-eyed hag, who now and then, as she talks, lifts the point of her stick, and makes little diagrams and circles in the air! The shrivelled hand, the fixed smile, the hawk-like eye and myriad wrinkles, lend a malignant force to that picture of a witch performing an incantation.

Now they join hands. The old woman's head is nodding in time to some last words; and now she walks, with her hunched stoop and wiry gait, swiftly enough to the old Druidic ring, close by, through which her path lies. As she reaches these tall grey stones, she turns, extending her long shrunken arm towards the girl, with an uncertain wave in the hand, as if pronouncing a farewell benediction. As she does so, William thinks she sees him; for it seemed, far as she was, that her piercing black eyes were directed suddenly on him. He had caught her eye, he felt. She remained fixed, for a moment or two. Then—had she made a sign to the girl?—she turned again, and disappeared among those hoary stones and bushes.

Euphan Curraple looked towards William, smiled—not kindly, he thought—and remained where she was.

The young Squire was nettled. Here was a secret conference—a secret influence, he assumed—advising, and planning, going on; and he not informed even of the subject of it! He was stung and angry. Yet, could anything be more unreasonable? What right on earth had he to all this girl's confidence?

Is not the whole Court of Love near akin to Bedlam? Is ever love without jealousy? And what madder than jealousy—save love itself?

If William had reflected for a moment, being proud, I think he would have walked straight home without troubling Euphan with a word. But, being impulsive too, he walked straight up to her, and raised his hat ironically, and said:

"I'm so afraid I've interrupted a conversation."

"Why need ye raise your hat, sir, to a gipsy girl?"

The avowal did not come by surprise on William. This was his second theory. But she interested him the more.

"I treat all people—and your sex especially—with respect."

"Oh no! That was banter, sir, and you're angry."

"Angry? Not a bit. Why should I?"

"Very true—why should you?" she replied, coldly.

"I say, I'm not angry!" said William, a little hotly. "Everyone has their own business, and, provided that's not interfered with, I don't see what right anyone has to be angry."

"It is I that should be angry, sir," said the girl.

"I don't think, lately," said William, "I have had an opportunity of saying anything to incur your displeasure."

"You should not have watched me, sir, like that; no gentleman would have done so."

As she spoke she waved her hand, ever so slightly, towards the spot where William had been standing.

"Watch you!" said William. "I never dreamed of such a thing. I was walking home, and saw you, and was surprised—little more than one minute; and I did not hear one word you were saying—not a syllable. If you knew anything of me—if you cared to understand me—you would know that I'm no such person; that's quite impossible."

"Well, you need look no more, and guess no more; I've told you all."

A brilliant colour flushed under the clear brown of that beautiful girl, and made her splendid black eyes burn like fire.

"You've told me only what I thought before, Euphan," he said, in a tone, on a sudden, quite changed. "I have read about your race, ever so much, with the deepest interest. Think what you will of me, Euphan, but don't think me a fool or a worldling. I treasure the words you said to me—words that you forget—when first you came, so true and wise, containing the very secret of all the happiness that this sad earth can yield."

"If you had asked me, sir, when I told you my name, I'd have told you all; we never deny our people. There are some of them passing, and they'll camp near the cat-stone, on the moss, to-night. They are bad gipsies; we don't like them, but they can fetch a message, and that old woman had a message for me. She says I may go on safely to my own people, now. That was all; I would have told you, if you had asked me."

She spoke a little coldly—she looked pained. What a dignity there was in this young queen of nature!

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE OPEN HEART.

"I HAVE TOLD you the truth," said William; "and when you think a little, Euphan, you will do me justice. I have not been watching you; you ought to have known that I was quite incapable of that."

"I was wrong, sir, I'm sure. I had not time to think—I was angry."

"Well, Euphan, you won't refuse to shake hands."

She laughed a little, and did shake hands.

"Euphan," said William, still holding her hand in his, "you are the loveliest creature on earth—there is no other like you!"

"You don't think so."

"I do, Euphan. I never dreamed of such a creature. You are the finest spirit, the most beautiful being—I adore you!"

"No—no, you don't." She shook her head, as if smiling the thought away.

"Oh, Euphan! you wring my heart—you are cruel!"

Euphan smiled her proud wild smile, in which expressions mingled strangely—something of disdain, more of compassion, also something beautiful of gratification.

"You Rias talk so to us gipsy-girls, but you don't mean it."

"Oh, darling! you'll break my heart. May God destroy me, but I do!"

He had taken her hand, and was holding it in both his.

"No, sir—ah no! 'Tis all folly," she said, drawing it back, with a look that was grave, and even sad, and, having withdrawn it, she waved it back, ever so little, her arm extended; but it was a prohibition queenlike, quite natural—even girlish, but not to be disobeyed.

"Why did God make you so beautiful and so pitiless?" said William, clasping his hands.

"Beauty is only in the eyes that see it. We are all as we are, sir—we can't change."

"'Sir!' You call me 'sir,' and you promised to call me 'Willie.'"

"'Twas in play."

"No—it was no jesting; I never was so in earnest in my life," said William, impetuously.

"There is a distance between us."

"There's no distance, Euphan; what shall I do to prove it?" wildly he answered.

"I don't mean rank—there's no rank," she said, carelessly. "The real gipsy was never a servant from the time the world began."

"Where is the distance, then?"

"Wide and wild as the sea," she said sadly, and smiled, and was grave again. "My mother told me, a Gorgio, long ago, married one of our people—a girl he fell in love with; it was but a fancy, it could not be more. It would not do—never; the tame and the wild bird should not mate."

"God made us all, Euphan; there's no such difference. I have read of your wild free life—there's nothing like it. Young men of wealth and birth have so fallen in love with it as to renounce all, and follow the fortunes of the camp, and chosen beautiful wives of your mysterious race, and lived free and happy, and every year loved its liberty and beauty better, and never repented their choice, or thought with a sigh of the dull world they had left behind."

Euphan smiled a melancholy smile at these wild words:

If I thought you spoke in earnest, sir, you should see me no more. You shan't stay with me longer. Go your way home, Willie, as if you had not seen me. I'll talk no more now, nor listen no more now, for Euphan's heart is heavy."

"Euphan!" he said, wild and pale, "you are going; if I leave you now I shall see you no more. Swear—that if I leave you, you will return as usual!"

"I will," she said.

"You would not deceive me?" he pleaded.

"I'll go back, as you say, sir. I'll be thinking a bit here, alone; and I'll go to the house again, and see you just the same as ever."

The Squire looked in her face for a moment; it was pale and gentle, and the fires of her lustrous eyes were misty. In that saddened face was a look he could not doubt.

As he went homeward alone, a mad dream was whirling in his brain:

"Oh Euphan! if I thought you could ever love me best of all! Yes, the wild free life!—there's nothing like it; the miserable life that chains us to fear and drudgery is all a fallacy. Give me the life of the tent, the mountain march, the forest camp, the simple free republic, where mortals have time to think, and to enjoy, and live with nature—God's beautiful creation! Think no more of vain pre-eminence and tawdry competition, and the fever and lassitude of a shabby ambition. What a miserable slave I've been!—what a coward and a suicide! I've had enough of this. I have found courage at last. Beautiful Euphan! you are the spirit of liberty, who can break my chains, and lead me into an enchanted world!"

Chapter XXIV.

FURIOSO.

Euphan Curraple kept her word. She was soon by old Martha's side again. She was very merry. Never had the old kitchen rung to pleasanter peals of laughter.

William heard these sounds, as he paced his study, in a tumult of fancies and feelings. He opened the door, and leaned smiling at its side, with his arms folded. He hardly breathed, for the voice that was more silvery than choirs of angels in his ear was dimly audible in the merriment: and oh! how clear, and though the faintest, the only one he heard. He sighed, in his lonely rapture.

A world as new as the world of spirits was opening to him. These sounds of merriment were of good augury to him, he hoped. Had she thought over all he had said, and was she happy? Oh! if that friendless being could only love him as he loved her—hand-in-hand, through enchanted ground, they would walk henceforward together!

His darling was there—his idol, his muse, his beautiful spirit—and everything was interesting; the tick of his old Dutch clock was musical; the light of fairyland was on the panels of his homely house. The look down the dim passage was a gaze into beautiful futurity. O Time! wing on, and bear him swiftly to the gate of his paradise!

Next morning, just as usual, Euphan was there, very merry, at breakfast with old Martha.

You are not to suppose that she was a useless visitor. Ready to lend a hand whenever it was needed—very quick, very neat was she, and could use her needle for half an hour as well as any. She was a wise adviser, too, in all household matters; and old Martha had come, by this time, habitually to consult her—obliquely and accidentally, as it were; for the old housekeeper had her pride of rule and care, but made no secret of her opinion that the lass had a good notion of housekeeping, and would make a very pretty housewife in time. And anything she did was pleasantly done, with a song or a story.

Now it was the last loitering five or ten minutes after their last cup of tea, when Mall had gone to her work in the scullery, or among the poultry, and she and Mrs. Gillyflower were alone, each on her clumsy kitchen-chair, at the opposite side of the little deal table on which their cloth was spread—clumsy, but also beautifully white.

"There's a song I used to laugh at," said the handsome stranger, smiling down upon her hands that lay on the table—"about a poor girl that loved a prince, and the prince loved her, ever so much, and he would have married her; but she bethought her, how his father the king, and his mother the queen, would rate him, and his lords and great folk despise him, and how he would be made little of, and sorry—and all for her sake. And just because she loved him too well, she would not marry him—and wasn't she a big fool?"

"Never a bigger," acquiesced Martha.

"She was called Dun Alice, and he was the Lord of Linton, and a king's son. And will ye miss the song, and the dances, and all the nonsense—and think of me when I'm gone away?"

And suddenly, leaning across the table, she kissed old Martha on the cheek; and Martha caught her close to her heart, and said:

"Gone, lass! Ye shan't think o' that for mony a day. I would not know my old self, or the old house, or the fields without ye, my bonny rogue!"

And thus saying, old Martha rose abruptly, with a little laugh, and trotted away to the dresser, and then to the cupboard—or (as in that northern region they term it) the "catmallison"— and was busy over cups and flagons, in an instant; for she did not choose people to see her eyes wet, and dried them hastily, with her back turned, and speaking hilariously all the time.

William was not likely to make a secret of his love anywhere. But he could not tell how Euphan might resent his letting Martha guess it, and therefore he had to act with circumspection. Sorely it tried him, as you may fancy, to know that she was so near, and yet so effectually hidden from him. As to reading, that was quite out of the question; equally so was his remaining in his study. He was in a state of the sublimest restlessness.

Quietly, with an unavowed fear of old Martha Gillyflower, he let himself out, gently, by the hall-door, and stood leaning on the outer edge of the porch, vainly looking for Euphan, listening for her voice.

Then the young Squire walked away through the trees to the right, and, making a detour, reached the wood of thorn and birch, oak and hazel, that skirts the moss, and so up again, by the Druid ring of tall stones—always, henceforward, an enchanted region for him.

Quite lonely it now was, and beyond it, through rugged glades of scattered dwarf oak and birch, he still looked in vain.

He was in the *acme* of his fever—he could not rest. Those who measure all things by mundane prudences and proprieties will regard his infatuation with proper astonishment and disgust. There are others to whom it will appear essential true love, and in so far heavenly as it was uncontaminated by the sordid. The inner man, the *καρδια*, the spiritual man who is to live for ever, is the shrine of every celestial affection. There reside the true and the loving in all human nature. If not there, both are extinct, and what is then that inner man? An immortal principle of evil, the Satanic lord of the tabernacle of the flesh, which is not, as in the happier man, a veil through which, as in the countenance, the glory of the inner love and truth shines forth; but a fixed and a goodly mask, within which lurks and rules a satanic stranger. When, from the celestial tenant in the other, shines forth a sudden truth or affection—how the heavenly spirits thrill with a strange delight! In this law is the life of what we call romance—that noble folly, which to some seems so ridiculous, and to others so beautifully wise.

William is now walking in his dream—in his delirium. The intoxication is not, as in some, selfish. Generous madness!—who can charm it into sanity, or impose on it the laws of plodding quietude? Will it listen to reason, or be strapped down on its bed? Alas! no; it will talk from its frenzy, and enjoy its suicidal liberty—and gather supernatural strength from its very mania.

Euphan liked, when the sun shone out, to sit on a stile, or under an old tree, or to wander up and down the hedgerows—with the dog by her side, or the bird's cage in her fingers—singing sometimes, sometimes silent, and sometimes talking to her mute companions.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE STONE AND TREE.

MANY SUCH excursions "the young Squire" made that day, in vain. It was in the evening, on the old weird ground, where, among the wild woods, stand the huge grey blocks of the Druid worship, that he saw his love at last.

"Euphan! I feared I was never to find you."

She laughed; and was not there, under her clear brown tint, a beautiful crimson, for a minute flooding up, and then ebbing softly away?

"How did this wild bird come to me?" thought William, as he looked on her with a tender wonder.

And so he began to talk, approaching that with which his heart was fullest.

"I told you I had read," he said, "of beautiful girls of your race, Euphan, who have married into ours, and they and their daughters have become great ladies; and they have continued to maintain friendship with their own people, and have done them, in their day, great services."

"They were bad gipsies, though," said Euphan, with a shake of her small head, and a smile. "There's but the one way—the wild life or the tame. They could never come back, like a bird that has been tamed; her own will shun her."

"But, oh! if she loved the man, could not she leave all, and be happy?" said William.

Again that beautiful tint dyed her cheeks. There was a silence, and her eyes were lowered to the fern, with which the tip of her slim shoe was fiddling.

"She might leave all, but she could not be happy, for she'd always know he'd a' done wiser to have married one of his own. But 'tis nothing to me," she said, with a slight fierce change, and her eyes glanced by his with a sudden flame; and then, with a cold contemptuous carelessness, she continued: "I care for nothing—no one—not even myself. I'm a young lass—nineteen I count young—and I'm happy enough; let them settle their affairs that has such nonsense to manage, and when I hear the story 'twill make Euphan laugh hearty. There's many a man has been kind to me, and I'll give him my hand, and wish him luck from my heart, and glad to say a good-natured word to him; but for love, I don't know what it is, and for its sake I would not pluck that weed. That's not Euphan—she's not like that; there'll never live the man she'd walk a mile to meet, or fret an hour if he was to go for ever."

She stood, pale, and smiling, with her fiery eyes on William, with a cruel pride.

The worst pain he had ever known was at William's heart as he looked on the graceful cold girl. For a little time he was silent.

"I won't leave you, Euphan, even for that," he said, in the low tone of a deeply wounded man. And so beginning, little by little, he recounted the wild story of his love—and on, and on, into passionate pleading. "Don't turn—don't go; it costs you but a moment's patience to hear me out, and when it's over you'll say you don't like me, and never can like me, or let me hope for your love."

"I *could* not say that, Willie," she answered, with her hands locked together, and looking at him, as he stood by her shoulder, with such a pale mournful face as painter never dreamed. "Willie, where was the use of breaking Euphan's heart? I wish I liked ye less—I might be happy then."

"Oh God!—my darling!" he said, and his face was pale, in his rapture, as that of a man who had received his death-wound.

"Willie—Willie—Willie," she said, as gently as a child—each "Willie" sounding like a sob—"you don't know; you shouldn't a' spoke kind to me—you should a' let me go."

"Oh, Euphan!" he cried, with a dreadful thought, "you like some one else—you like another better!"

"Never, never!—no, Willie, never. There's none, and never was, but only you. But, for all that, the night ye found me in the storm, standing by the stone, 'twould a' been well if you had passed me by—or better," she said, with a sudden wild sob, "if ye had put your gun to my head and shot me."

The anguish of an uncertainty dashed his rapture. Proud, pale, happy, yet with the same strange anguish, he held her hand clasped in both his, and looked with dilated gaze for his unknown fate in her beautiful face. For a time not a word was spoken—he wondering, in tumultuous silence, what grief lay at the little heart that was so near him. At last he said, scarcely above a whisper:

"Euphan!—Euphan, darling! say, I implore, what it is!"

"'Tis only—nothing; only Euphan's heart is sore."

"You don't doubt me? Oh, Euphan! you are not so cruel. You said I was true-hearted," pleaded the young Squire. "You could not think me false."

"No; if I had a' thought that, I would a' never looked at you," she said, with a cold fierce smile and tone of disdain, that seemed to chill him; and she went on, like herself: "No, no, Willie—never, no; nothin' false in you—a gentleman, true and high—a one to live and die for. Oh, Willie! the world's all wrong." And with these words came a sudden gush of tears.

Hastily she laid her hands across her eyes, and turned, and walked hurriedly backwards and forwards within the circuit of the grey monumental blocks among which they stood. William followed; but with her hand, in her wayward mood, she impatiently pushed him back, and continued, with a passionate step, to walk to and fro.

She stopped, and looked up and down, and clasped her hands, and stamped.

"Oh! mad—mad! Did ye ever see a fool like Euphan? The sky, nor the grass, nor my own voice, nor nothing, is like itself—all's gone changed. I know ye so short a time, Willie, and can I never forget ye? The quiet times long ago!—children's very happy. Just a wee thing, four years old, stretching after flowers in the tarn. Oh! why didn't they let me drown that time, and this poor heart wouldn't a' been beatin' now!"

It seemed to Willie that this flood of feeling must be suffered to rush and eddy its own way into quiet; he had laid his arm against one of the huge old stones, and leaned, following her with the sad eyes and patient love that watch the tossings and ravings of sickness.

With a change of mood she came to his side, and laid her small Oriental hand on his shoulder, looking up into his face, with a sad childlike trust in her eyes. She said, very low and softly:

"You've handsome hair—soft, rich brown. Ah! yes, my handsome Willie, that fought for me."

"My beautiful spirit! Here I found you," said he, enthusiastically.

"What will your fortune be, Willie?—what? I won't tell your fortune now. Well, am I to call ye 'Willie'?"

Though her eyes were upon him, it was not as if she asked Willie, but something else.

William Haworth smiled, and laid his hand tenderly on her shoulder, with the adoration of all his manly heart.

"I'll tell it to-morrow—shall I?—and Euphan's too. And I must have a bit of your hair, mind—Willie's hair. 'Twill be a good fortune, and you'll be a great man. Some kind grief first, and then all good after; and Euphan's will be a long one, and—a short."

As she spoke thus softly, as it were, to herself, with her fingers over his shoulder, she was choosing a lock of the silken-brown hair, that grew, in long curls, at the back of his head. It was quietly, as if she had a right to it, and she never asked him.

He smiled fondly down at her, as he might on a beautiful wayward child.

And now up come her tiny scissors, tied to thin blue-silk ribbon; and she snips off the lock of brown hair gravely, and holds it before her sad eyes, and then winds a little bit of red thread fast round it, and places it in her bosom.

She looked up now, with her pretty laugh.

"Ain't we queer cats, and never thinks o' one thing—no, not half an hour? Come, now; and look ye, we are going to be merry, now; cryin' comes in change and time; and time and change will dry our tears again, and I am going to make ye laugh with the dance we danced before. Ah, lad—if we had but a clever fiddler! I'll go home alone, mind."

She smiled over her shoulder as she turned away, and had reached the farthest stone of the ring, when she turned her head, stopping, and looking at him, said softly, to herself, "One other look;" and her look was all the sadder that her smile still lingered there, and then, with a little wave of her hand, away ran the pretty stranger, with a tread light and proud as a deer's.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE BED UNTREASURED.

It was a merry evening at Haworth House. William smoked his pipe in the kitchen chimney-nook, for his half-hour, which grew to twice as long; and quaint song and dance made the hour hilarious, pretty, long remembered.

All is over now. He is in his study. The Dutch clock, in the firelight, ticks briskly; and its friendly face glows kindly over the young man's romantic dreams of the Robin Hood life that is before him, with his nutbrown maid. The passion so sublime, the scenery so wild—all that is so true and yet so visionary—

"All that time has disenchanted,"

All thé house, but this room, is dark now. In a little time more he, too, is in his bed, and fast asleep. Deep in the night comes a dream. How it began—what it was about—he forgets. Only he hears in it the wild song:

"The hawthorn-tree
Is dear to me,
The elver-stone likewise—
The lonely air
That lingers there,
And thought, that never dies."

The distant song, in his dream, sounded clear and sad. He started up, listening, with a beating heart. The notes seemed still in his ear. But the night-air was silent. The scenery of his dream had flown, and there was darkness only when he tried to recall it. It was as if he had dreamed only of a sweet voice issuing from darkness.

He sighed deeply, listening on. An unaccountable melancholy was heavy at his heart—that pure deep melancholy of a farewell in childhood, that hardly ever returns in after-life.

Yet, why should it last? All was a dream. Nothing is changed. And so, after a while, he falls asleep again, and no dream comes.

Early he awakes, and is out among the trees in the morning air, with the restlessness of a lover. All his future is sweet with the opening flowers, and sparkles in the morning sun, and rustles with the freedom of the forest.

But that morning a change is to befall him.

He is now back again in his study; and at some time past nine o'clock, old Martha comes in, in a great taking, and stands to harangue him without closing the door. Her jolly old face is pale; she gesticulates indignantly, and is in a great excitement.

What she had to tell was this: Euphan, the girl, had totally disappeared. It was no accidentally late ramble in the fields or woodlands. The red bag, with the things she had brought with her, was gone; her grey cloak, which she never took in her walks with her, was gone also. She had made her bed, and the forsaken room was neat as ever, and the flowers stood in the glass on the little table beside the window. She must have visited the bedside of Mall, for some silver in a little bit of blue silk was pinned to the cover of her pillow, and a pretty little carved ivory needlecase, that Martha Gillyflower used to admire, was found tied round with a bit of silk ribbon in a bow, and in like manner pinned over old Martha's head. The hall-door and back-door were undisturbed; but the side-door, that opened on what was called the meadow, was unbarred, and through it she had gone.

William Haworth stands before her, like a ghost, speechless—his face ashy-white. For a long time he can't believe the story, and she has to repeat it over and over. Still he can't believe it—won't believe it.

He stalks by old Martha's side from room to room, to visit the evidences of the flight, in dumb half-credulous panic. Old Martha is at his elbow, denouncing, in her grim northern dialect, the ingratitude of the lass who has turned her back on her best friends without a "God-b'-wi'-ye," and "out o' window wi' her like a bird, and, God knows, none but a daffy would wish her back, the graceless lass!"

"She's gone!" said William, wildly. "My God! why didn't you look after her? She's gone!—you've let her go! I shall never see her again; and I charge you with it all!"

He shook his hand in the air distractedly, as if he could have cursed her; and he looked so scared and furious that Martha could not "find," as they say, "her tongue." She stared at him, with her mouth agape, for the second that he stood thus—and then he was gone, and the hall-door clapped after him; and when she had recovered breath, she said:

"Agoy! there's a rageous lad for ye! Here's a clitter-clatter! An' all this coil, an' rampin' an' rearin', acos a firligig lass like that takes the road by night, and off to seek aunters, like that! Hev I bin winkin' all this time, en Willie in love wi' the lass! Who'd a' thought they wor so sly? Weel! I say, he shud nae hev made that undacent hirdum-durdum; she's a graceless lass, howe'er it be. But I sud-na ca' her a firligig; she's nane o' that lids. Na—na, puir thing! she was as harmless, and had as many tricks, as a kittling," she continued, softening. "Bonny and winsome she was. I could a'most wimple like a child—but, oh! she'll come back—she could not do so —she'll come again."

So old Martha—excited and disquieted—ruminated, thinking sometimes one thing, and sometimes another. Sometimes her anger was kindled against Euphan, who seemed in her eyes an artful "hizzy" who had ensnared the affections of the Squire of Haworth; and sometimes she fancied that she had flown to prevent her losing her heart to a gentleman quite out of her rank; and sometimes she thought only of the change, and how the hour would be dull without Euphan.

CHAPTER XXVII.

PURSUIT.

WILLIAM did not return that night—nor for two long years. During that time he travelled all England over. By woods and wilds, by moss and moor, wherever a fleeting gipsy camp was pitched, his wandering search was directed.

Euphan Curraple—any tidings of her? He would make it worth their telling. They should have what they asked for the discovery. These strange people listened to his earnest imploring appeals, gravely and civilly—sometimes thoughtfully—and spoke together in their own language; but always it ended in their saying that they knew no such person. People of the name they knew, but no Euphan Curraple.

He tracked his old adversary, Lussha Sinfield. That rogue did not like him, for a gipsy can bear most things better than being foiled at the game on which he prides himself by a "Gorgio." Still the Squire's money was as good coin as another man's, and William offered it freely for any tidings of Euphan.

The man eyed him with a dark steady gaze; he was civil, and heard him out, and was silent for a while after he had done.

Sinfield's grey and chestnut had been sold, I suppose; old Cowper was holding a cart-horse by a halter when the Squire reached them. They stood under a group of two or three trees at the edge of a common, where a little brook runs by, and meant to make a halt of some hours.

Sinfield looked out of the corners of his large dark eyes, as if at a distant object, and repeated: "Euphan Curraple! I can't say, I'm sure; I'll ask my partner."

And he turned on his heel, and walked to his comrade. William's heart beat violently as he watched him, and a mist seemed to cover his eyes.

Sinfield leaned across the horse's back, and talked with his companion in their own tongue. The old gipsy looked hard at the Squire, as they talked low, for a while. Then the young man turned about, and told William, carelessly:

"No—he don't know no such woman."

"Did you tell him all I said?" exclaimed William. "Here! I say—you're Cowper, I saw you at the fair—I'll pay you what you please, if only you'll tell me where I may hear anything of Euphan Curraple."

"There's many a woman might tell you," said the surly old fellow.

"Where?" asked William, with his soul at his lips.

"What is she to you?" Cowper replied, in turn, with a question.

"She was a guest at Haworth, and she's gone," he answered; "and we don't know what's become of her."

"And how should we?" answered Cowper, gruffly.

"Who are those women you spoke of," urged William, "who could tell me anything of her?"

"Such as lives in tents," said Sinfield; and Cowper nodded.

"Ay, 'tis them I mean," said the old man, who was now stuffing his pipe with tobacco.

"Gipsies?" said William.

"Why not?" answered Cowper.

"Are there any near here?" he asked, with a hope strangely rising into agony at his heart.

"There's five tents at Tarlton."

"That's about ten miles away?" said William, pointing with his arm northward.

"And a bit, " added Sinfield.

The old fellow lighted his pipe.

"Is she with them?" asked William, awaiting the answer—with what feelings you may guess.

"Not as we know," interposed Sinfield; "you know more about that young woman yourself than me and Cowper does, I'm thinkin'."

"And—and what are they likely to tell me?" asked William.

"Cross their hands with gold and they'll tell ye," said the old man, sternly, at the same time carelessly.

And he and Sinfield both again looked hard at the Squire.

"Do they know?—Do you think they know?—How do they know?" asked William, all in a gush.

"By the planets, and the hand—how else?" said old Cowper, spitting on the ground.

"They'll tell you what they knows, and very like they'll tell ye what ye want."

"Come, now," said William, suddenly, "I know all about you. You and he, there, were pursuing that young girl Euphan Curraple; and, for anything I know, you may have waylaid her as she went; and by ——! if she's either hurt or missing, I'll make you out, though you were hid under a mountain; and if I don't hear of her within a week, I'll have a warrant from the nearest magistrate, and arrest you both."

Old Cowper looked at him from the corners of his eyes, and smoked on contemptuously.

"That's a d——d rum way to talk to honest men," said Sinfield, with a swarthy flush, and a dangerous gleam from his dark eyes. "How do you know we ever heard her name? I don't care a blast! I'm d——d if I ever saw her in my days! You're talkin' like that stick, mayhap; the oak ain't out o' your head yet."

And he switched his clenched hand, as if dealing a blow with his cudgel.

William saw the ridicule and folly of a new row with these fellows; and a moment's reflection assured him of the improbability that one so cautious and astute, and, one way or other, so well-informed about their movements, should in reality have misdirected her way, and fallen into that danger.

"Well," said William, "you may be good fellows enough, though I don't think you have much to boast about oak-sticks; but if you do know, you may as well tell, and I'll make it better for you than I said—I will, indeed."

"We knows nothing, him nor me, about her. D——n it! isn't once enough? Don't ye think we'd like what ye offers well enough? It takes a while at horse-dealin' to turn that money, I'll swear—doesn't it, Cowper?"

And Sinfield laughed angrily.

Cowper smoked on, listlessly. William waited in vain.

"Well, we shall see," said William, with a heavy sigh. "I'll try the people at Tarlton, as you say."

"You'll give us something to drink, after all that?" said Cowper, as the Squire turned his horse's head away, and William threw him a shilling that was loose in his pocket. And after he had got some way, looking back suddenly, he saw the two gipsies looking steadily after him, and fancied they were conversing upon the interview that had just ended.

They did not turn away, or affect to conceal it; on the contrary, they continued to follow him with their eyes, steadily, till he was out of sight.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A HOPE.

IT WAS nightfall when the Squire of Haworth reached the common of the little village of Tarlton, and beheld the gipsy tents and fires dimly before the darkening screen of wood, under the shelter of a green bank.

He dismounted, and led his weary horse up to the nearest tent. Every man who is good for anything knows, or at least remembers, the flutter and yearning with which he approached the place where he suspects his beloved may possibly be. Let him magnify this a thousandfold, and bring it up to the point of anguish, and he will guess what William felt as he strode across the twilight grass, toward this solitary little camp of the gipsies.

And now he was among them, his horse by the bridle. They saw a tall young man, with something fine in his bearing—pale, melancholy, and with the light of an intense anxiety in his eyes.

People less shrewd would have known that a call at such an hour indicated an unusual agitation.

A tall handsome gipsy, with very dark face, and a bright-coloured handkerchief about his neck, stood with his arms folded, and his feet apart, smoking in front of the tent. William hesitated. He would rather ask the women. An instinctive trust, in such a case, in feminine sympathy determined him. As he drew near, dogs barked, and a pet fox yelped, and a startled parrot screamed from the shadow of the tents of this pet-loving people. The man drove back the dogs without disturbing his pose or his pipe, with a backward cut or two of the switch he held, in the air.

"You'd like your fortune told?" the man asked, civilly.

The Squire assented, and a sibyl of the same dark race emerged—not a young woman, nor yet old—somewhere about eight-and-thirty, a dark black-haired matron, with a "rom" lying his length by the tent-fire smoking, and half-a-dozen wild little "charies" playing and gabbling together, and teasing a donkey.

So he crossed her hand and the fortune was told, and then again he crossed it; and they grew more confidential, and William made his tempting promises, and asked his earnest questions. She listened, and answered not, but signed to a girl who was lurking before a tent-door, and in a low tone gave her a message.

From a tent in the rear—the tent perhaps of the chief—she returned, accompanied by a mahogany-coloured old woman, smiling, fierce-eyed; and the handsome girl who had summoned her, extending her arm, with the palm downward, indicated their visitor and his prophetess, and looking round the sky to guess the weather, or (as one might fancy) to read the stars, that had begun to glimmer, she stooped, and re-entered the tent from which she had come.

The old woman raised her dark bony arm, regarding the sibyl with a fixed smile, and William's dark-eyed sorceress left him, and talked for a minute or two with the crone, whose countenance changed not; though the Squire, who watched intently, saw that she made one or two gestures, that were solemn and grim, as she spoke.

The old woman departed, and the sorceress returned.

"No," she said, in the same calm tone, "we don't know such a person, nor no such name; but let me see your hand."

"Is she," thought William, "about to make a circuitous revelation of facts, by way of prediction? And does she mean thus to mark what she regards as a betrayal, and to secure the reward I promise?"

But when it came, the disclosure was only this—that the person he was most anxious to see had not gone the way he supposed, but southward, and that she would soon be in Devonshire.

No more could he expect.

With a heavy heart he wished her "Good night," and rode slowly away.

"These people," he thought, "are a freemasonry—impenetrable and peculiar. Their suspicion of us is profound. Their fidelity to their race is plainly incorruptible. Some irreparable disgrace attaches to the least betrayal; and the worst among them cannot be tempted to tell the secrets of the others. *There* is that Sinfield, who would injure her gladly, if he could; but he will not, for any sum I can offer, tell me one syllable about her; and yet he must know, generally, as he did before, something of her movements."

With the anguish of this thought, he rode his tired horse slowly through the twilight mist, toward the little inn of Tarlton.

But hope, that never leaves us absolutely or very long, soon returned, and pleased the Squire of Haworth with the same fancy that had cheered him before.

Sinfield, he thought, might have sent him on to the gipsy camp at this place, knowing that these people were possessed of the information that he sought; and they, in turn, clothed the fact he wanted in this prophetic guise, and, one day or other, might extract from his gratitude the reward they could not take on the terms on which it was offered. Thus once more the light of hope was kindled. If only he could see her face again, and plead his own cause with the wild despair and adoration of love!—she was not cruel; she would relent, and save him. Otherwise he must die!

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE WANDERER.

THE madness of the Squire of Haworth increased rather than abated, as weeks were added to weeks, and months followed months, and his wanderings led him to nothing, and hope deferred made the heart sick.

There was nothing he did not try—even advertisements in *The Times*, and offers of reward for information posted at country fairs. Every attempt of this kind resulted in—simply nothing. He had himself no faith in these devices, but it was worth knowing that he had left nothing untried. All his appeals were followed by inexorable silence.

North, south, east, west—all over England, and through its most devious paths, and unexplored moors and woods, and picturesque gipsy haunts, the young Squire pursued the phantom of his love, in vain.

Sometimes, as he rode, dejected, by solitary paths, in moonlight, he would draw bridle suddenly, and listen, breathless, for a sweet voice, heard again for a moment, in fancy, and as suddenly lost, and waited and listened for in vain. Sometimes in darkening hollows, or in the shadowy forest-glades, the figure that haunted his imagination seemed to stand before him in the distance; and beckon him toward her.

Sometimes farther, sometimes nearer—in the picturesque ravines of Derbyshire, or in the nooks of wild and solitary Dartmoor—in his lonely travels, deep in the night, he has seen her—approached, and the illusion vanished; and under the bank or scaur where she seemed to be, he has sat down, and wept the bitter tears that are shed in solitude, and called her beloved name to the heedless rocks and bushes with a deepening sense of the irrevocable.

Heaven knows, in those days of exalted imagination and wild sorrow, how near to madness he may have been!

But Time, the consoler, works his slow but sure mercies. Not that consolation which grief, in its first wild agony, most fears—forgetfulness—or the subsidence of the first passionate affection; for who, in his wildest agony, would drink of the waters of Lethe, and think no more of the beloved and lost?

The chase is over—he will never see her more. In stilly evening, in the soft gloom, in the dark archways of the old trees, in the melancholy chasms of the ruins of Hazelden, or in the gloaming by "the hawthorn-tree" and "elver-stone," he sees a beautiful phantom. Or when "the call" is on the air—that far-off sighing sound, by which, in the North-country, they foretell the coming storm—the lonely Squire sometimes hears, like a voice from another shore (so faint), the silvery laughter and sad tones of his love.

The tumult is ended, and the melancholy, which Hope disturbs no more, is come.

Two years have passed, and the Squire is at Haworth—at home. The broken thread of his old life is, as it were, reknit.

Have these two years, filled with a wild episode, been quite lost? They will be the best remembered of all his life, though never told to any. They will sweeten and sadden all his future thoughts; and, no doubt, they have wrought their good and enduring work upon a character elevated by suffering.

He has returned to his books and his work; graver, more thoughtful, more gentle he has grown. Otherwise, prudent people will see no change. It will just be, in their opinion, that William Haworth has returned to his senses—is quite sobered, and that his heart is once more in his sensible plans, and bent on winning his way in this arduous world.

But the romance of life is not over. While memory lives it will never die. There is no one to speak to—no one who cares, or will ever know about it, now. But it will never die, for a year or an hour, till William Haworth dies. A man's works and his words are not always his life. The real life of the man is his dream and his love. Blessed is he for whom both are high and pure!

William is working now as hard as ever, and things go on in their old humdrum way at Haworth, duller than before. For, never to return, a vision from a wonderful land has lighted up that homely place and vanished, and the walls seem to darken and contract; and talk is tasteless, and the air drowsy. Not for a long time will any one care to laugh there; and work is work, and something always wanting.

Old Martha for a long time used to look toward the fields, and the thorn-trees, and the half-hidden grey columns among the copse, in the untold hope that some day would see her returning "home" with her old smile and song, and her arch pranks, to make Haworth alive again.

But never more was that to be; and so, gradually, the hope died out, and Haworth was just a grey old house, as before, and the moss a wide black sea before it, and the people lonely.

Old Martha's jealousy of the girl who had made Master Willie "daft" almost, had passed away, though it sometimes helped a little to reconcile her to her flight. Perhaps she was a little sore, too, at her leaving the old house and kind faces so easily. Also she missed her. And Mall's heart also was heavy, and her eyes filled, when she thought of her.

William's thoughts were for himself alone. Sweetbrier—Euphan was often thought of, but seldom named in that house. It was like a place in which the darling of the house had died.

Great changes were coming in William Haworth's life—one of those sudden changes of destiny which sometimes befall poor men who are richly connected. A very simple series of events, no one very unlikely by itself, and turning upon the order in which so inevitable an event as death may reach some four or five people, will make a golden transformation in the life of such a man.

It was nothing in the fairyland of 'Debrett.' No title had reached him. It was simply an estate, the right to which two or three unlikely deaths had transmitted to him, with the swift zigzag of a flash of lightning.

He has not gone to India; no need now of any such emigration. New duties have grown up about him—occupations, privileges, cares. But he is unchanged—gentle, manly, generous still, the same in heart. He has long left the solitudes of Haworth, to which, however, for a month or so, he returns every autumn, and shoots a little over the moss and the heath, and fishes in the Dwyle, as in old times.

By stone and tree the midnight shadows come and go, but the beautiful phantom of his earlier youth has faded from year to year, and comes no more. Still in the deep well of memory, where secrets lie, he sees it. He can look, as men look in after-years upon a miniature, unseen by any, and solitary tears roll over the face that will smile no more in the light of those features.

But in the grosser light of the world his work must now be done. Its cares and labours are upon him. These are but the intervals.

Ten years have passed since the night when, with his gun on his shoulder, after the long march over the moss, he first saw Euphan Curraple, and offered her shelter, and placed her in the care of good old Martha Gillyflower. How far away it all seems now! How it has receded into perspective!

William Haworth is married. The kindest and truest of husbands, the gentle highborn lady, his wife, adores him. One beautiful child, a little girl now more than three years old, makes their house bright.

William is now a Member of Parliament, and has taken to his House of Commons' work with the love of distinction and contempt of labour which belong to his energetic character.

Things are changed since the old life at Haworth.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE DREAM.

THE SESSION is not over, although it is the first week in August. It cannot last many days longer. There will be no House to-night, and William has taken a long ride into the country. He takes the road by which his pretty wife and little girl are returning. That gentle lady, with their one little daughter, has passed the day before with a friend, some eight-and-twenty miles out of town.

William surprises the beloved travellers at the little wayside posting-house where they change their horses. Here he kisses his treasures, and they have their quiet little chat, and she thanks him with all her heart.

And then she says, as they get into the carriage, smiling in William's face, for he has mounted his horse, and he smiles down upon her, answering:

"You know your promise? You are to go your own pace and your own way home, and you are not to ride by the carriage, where you'll be covered with dust; and we'll meet there, and talk ever so much."

"My good little darling is always thinking of other people," he answered, fondly.

"And you must—you'll promise?"

"I will—I do," he laughed.

"Well then, you must ride on before."

"Imperious little woman, I obey!"

And he smiled and nodded, and rode on.

There was nothing in particular to trouble William Haworth; but why was there, that day, the melancholy of a foreboding at his heart? As he reached the old Forest of Epping he had slacked his pace. Sunset was approaching. The gold and red were in the western clouds, and the amber-and-green tints of evening in the sky, across which, with a drowsy cawing—the only sounds upon the air—the crows were sailing homeward to their cover.

Just in that transitory light, "a fairer sadder scene" he could not have fancied. He dismounted, and led his horse along the edge of the road, hoping that the carriage might overtake him, as it soon did. And so a ten minutes' ramble was agreed on; William leading his horse, his pretty wife engrossed with the laughing care of the child, that was toddling and running and tumbling on the grass, as it gravely prattled to itself, or laughed, with arms extended, and hands half-open.

There is a melancholy in the distant future as well as in the retrospect, and, looking at our children, the long vista opens, and "the summers that we shall not see" are in our thoughts.

William held his horse by the rein, on a little eminence among the old trees. Some gipsy tents showed in the foreground, at the edge of the thicker forest, and, saddened by association, the sight stole him slowly away into dreamland. And as he stood there in his reverie, among the faint sounds, over the soft lights of sunset, a sweet voice floated from the distant wood.

What is that? Like a voice from the land of spirits, the old song trembles on the evening air:

"The hawthorn-tree
  Is dear to me,
The elver-stone likewise;
  The lonely air
  That lingers there,
And thought that never dies.

"In evening glow
  The may will blow,
The stone a shadow cast;
  And stone and tree
  A bield will be,
As in the summers past.

"And words as dear
  Will others hear
Beneath the hawthorn-tree,
  In leafy May,
  At fall of day,
Where I no more shall be."

The long note died into silence, and came no more. With a strange sense of unreality, and a wild tremor of his heart, the Squire of Haworth walked down the gentle slope, over the ferns and daisies, toward the tents. At the door of one of them he saw his wife talking with a gipsy-woman. He followed, and leaving his horse's bridle in the hand of a man who was smoking his pipe, leaning against a cart whose shafts were in the air, he stooped, and entered the soft shadow of the wattled tent. Very neat, singular, even pretty, were its arrangements, and a gleam of the evening sun, touching it, lighted a portion of the interior with a softened glow. As in a dream, William took his little child's hand in his, and stood, and "hearing heard not and seeing saw not," for it seemed all a vision.

"Send Euphan here," said the gipsy matron, stooping, and speaking through the tent-door.

"And now I'll tell your fortune, please, ma'am," said this grave polite matron, with the large dark eyes of her race. His wife smiled over her shoulder as she submitted her hand to the soothsayer, and in a minute more the low measured talk began, and in another minute Euphan was in the tent. A chill passed over William, as if he would have fainted. He saw her plainly as she saw him. Ten years had passed, and yet she was as beautiful, he thought, as ever, except for the sadness in her face—that was a change.

He felt that she knew him, but she showed no sign—not the least—of recognition. This perfect self-command and presence of mind, in a people by nature so fiery and impetuous, is a strange evidence of the dangers through which the race has passed. She came, and said some words he did not hear, and took his hand, and in her low sweet voice told his fortune thus:—

"You have married a very good lady, that is highborn and beautiful, and loves you well. You are very honourable, and you will be always true to her, and love her to the end of your life. You have one little child, and it will be beautiful, and good to you. And you have had sorrow, and you have passed it by, and it is over now. And you are kind to the poor, and would like to make them happy; and there's many a one that likes you, and wishes you well. And though you are so kind, you are very brave, and would fight for them you like, and spare none, nor your own blood. And there's some that were ungrateful, and some you thought ungrateful that never were so, but loved you well; for the good you do is not lost, though you may forget it. And there once was one that you thought ungrateful, and that person is single still, and will die single; and she thinks still of that one that was best to her of all the world, and so will to the end of her years, though she'll never see you more, nor you her."

And gently she let go his hand, and she laid hers caressingly on the head of the child, and looked on the golden locks, that resembled her father's in his earlier youth, and in the true deep-blue eyes, that also were like his—and she smiled. He saw the even little teeth, as in the old times at Haworth.

"And will ye keep this, darling, from the gipsy girl?" And very gently she placed a curious little oldfashioned locket, that she took from her breast, tied with a red ribbon, in the child's hand.

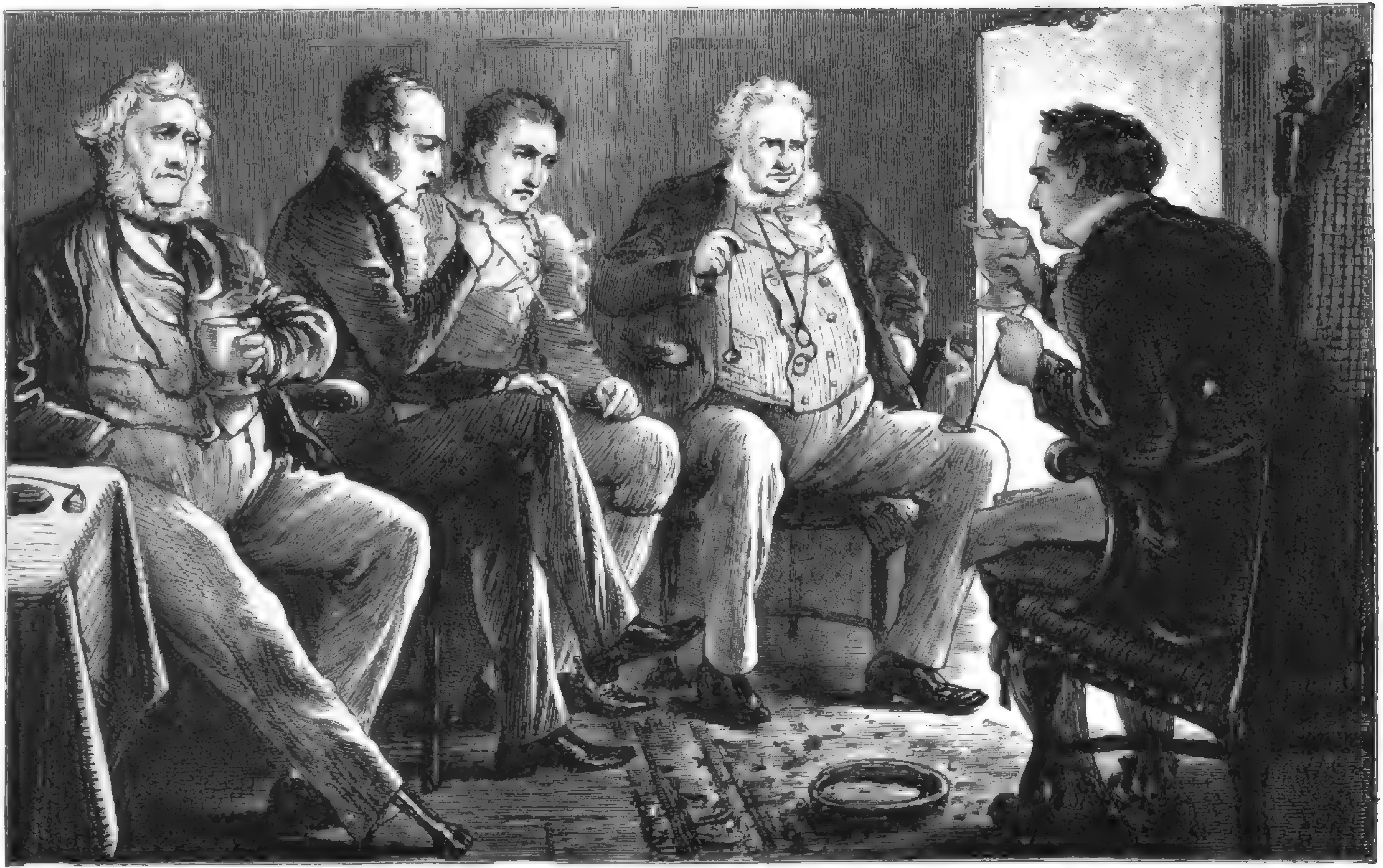
And the little girl turns up her large blue gentle eyes wonderingly, and with some awe, looking into the wild and tender smile of the gipsy.

And Euphan caught her up softly, and folded the child in her arms, and kissed it over and over again, smiling; and as she sat it down, a voice called to William, and a gentle hand touched him, and he turned to his smiling wife.

"Yes, darling," he said, laying his hand upon her arm, as people do who want a moment's pause; and when he turned again, Euphan was gone, and he never heard her voice again, and never saw her more.

The last beams of the setting sun lighted them on their returning path, and William Haworth rode slowly home, and in the twilight, communing with his own thoughts, wept bitterly.

THE END.



J. A. Pasquier, del.

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THE CONVIVES OF THE GEORGE AND DRAGON.

THE HAUNTED BARONET

BY J. S. LE FANU,

AUTHOR OF 'UNCLE SILAS,' ETC.

CHAPTER I. THE GEORGE AND DRAGON.

THE pretty little town of Golden Friars—standing by the margin of the lake, hemmed round by an amphitheatre of purple mountain, rich in tint and furrowed by ravines, high in air, when the tall gables and narrow windows of its ancient graystone houses, and the tower of the old church, from which every evening the curfew still rings, show silvery-white in the moonbeams, and the black elms that stand round throw moveless shadows upon the short level grass—is one of the most singular and beautiful sights I have ever seen.

There it rises, 'as from the stroke of the enchanter's wand,' looking so light and filmy, that you could scarcely believe it more than a picture reflected on the thin mist of night.

On such a still summer night the moon shone splendidly upon the front of the George and Dragon, the comfortable graystone inn of Golden Friars, with the grandest specimen of the old inn-sign, perhaps, left in England. It looks right across the lake; the road that skirts its margin running by the steps of the hall-door, opposite to which, at the other side of the road, between two great posts, and framed in a fanciful wrought-iron border splendid with gilding, swings the famous picture of St. George and the Dragon, gorgeous with colour and gold.

In the great room of the George and Dragon, three or four of the old *habitués* of that cozy lounge were refreshing a little after the fatigues of the day.

This is a comfortable chamber, with an oak wainscot; and whenever in summer months the air is sharp enough, as on the present occasion, a fire helped to light it up; which fire, being chiefly wood, made a pleasant broad flicker on panel and ceiling, and yet did not make the room too hot.

On one side sat Doctor Torvey, the doctor of Golden Friars, who knew the weak point of every man in the town, and what medicine agreed with each inhabitant—a fat gentleman, with a jolly laugh and an appetite for all sorts of news, big and little, and who liked a pipe, and made a tumbler of punch at about this hour, with a bit of lemon-peel in it. Beside him sat William Peers, a thin old gentleman, who had lived for more than thirty years in India, and was quiet and benevolent, and the last man in Golden Friars who wore a pigtail. Old Jack Amerald, an ex-captain of the navy, with his short-stout leg on a chair, and its wooden companion beside it, sipped his grog, and bawled in the old-fashioned navy way, and called his friends his 'hearties.' In the middle, opposite the hearth, sat deaf Tom Hollar, always placid, and smoked his pipe, looking serenely at the fire. And the landlord of the George and Dragon every now and then strutted in, and sat down in the high-backed wooden arm-chair, according to the old-fashioned republican ways of the place, and took his share in the talk gravely, and was heartily welcome.

'And so Sir Bale is coming home at last,' said the Doctor. 'Tell us any more you heard since.'

'Nothing,' answered Richard Turnbull, the host of the George. 'Nothing to speak of; only 'tis certain sure, and so best; the old house won't look so dowly now.'

'Twyne says the estate owes a good capful o' money by this time, hey?' said the Doctor, lowering his voice and winking.

'Weel, they do say he's been nout at dow. I don't mind saying so to *you*, mind, sir, where all's friends together; but he'll get that right in time.'

'More like to save here than where he is,' said the Doctor with another grave nod.

'He does very wisely,' said Mr. Peers, having blown out a thin stream of smoke, 'and creditably, to pull-up in time. He's coming here to save a little, and perhaps he'll marry; and it is the more creditable, if, as they say, he dislikes the place, and would prefer staying where he is.'

And having spoken thus gently, Mr. Peers resumed his pipe cheerfully.

'No, he don't like the place; that is, I'm told he *didn't*,' said the innkeeper.

'He *hates* it,' said the Doctor with another dark nod.

'And no wonder, if all's true I've heard,' cried old Jack Amerald. 'Didn't he drown a woman and her child in the lake?'

'Hollo! my dear boy, don't let them hear you say that; you're all in the clouds.'

'By Jen!' exclaimed the landlord after an alarmed silence, with his mouth and eyes open, and his pipe in his hand, 'why, sir, I pay rent for the house up there. I'm thankful—dear knows, I *am* thankful—we're all to ourselves!'

Jack Amerald put his foot on the floor, leaving his wooden leg in its horizontal position, and looked round a little curiously.

'Well, if it wasn't him, it was some one else. I'm sure it happened up at Mardykes. I took the bearings on the water myself from Glads Scaur to Mardykes Jetty, and from the George and Dragon sign down here—down to the white house under Forrick

Fells. I could fix a buoy over the very spot. Some one here told me the bearings, I'd take my oath, where the body was seen; and yet no boat could ever come up with it; and that was queer, you know, so I clapt it down in my log.'

'Ay, sir, there *was* some flummery like that, Captain,' said Turnbull; 'for folk will be gabbin'. But 'twas his grandsire was talked o', not him; and 'twould play the hangment wi' me doun here, if 'twas thought there was stories like that passin' in the George and Dragon.'

'Well, his grandfather; 'twas all one to the woman, I take it.'

'There never was no proof, Captain, no more than smoke; and the family up at Mardykes wouldn't allow the king to talk o' them like that, sir; for though they be lang deod that had most right to be angered in the matter, there's none o' the name but would be half daft to think 'twas still believed, and he full out as mich as any. Not that I need care more than another, though they do say he's a bit frowsy and short-waisted; for he can't shouther me out o' the George while I pay my rent, till nine hundred and ninety-nine year be rin oot; and a man, be he ne'er sa het, has time to cool before then. But there's no good quarrellin' wi' teathy folk; and it may lie in his way to do the George mony an ill turn, and mony a gude one; an' it's only fair to say it happened a long way before he was born, and there's no good in vexin' him; and I lay ye a pound, Captain, the Doctor hods wi' me.'

The Doctor, whose business was also sensitive, nodded; and then he said, 'But for all that, the story's old, Dick Turnbull—older than you or I, my jolly good friend.'

'And best forgotten,' interposed the host of the George.

'Ay, best forgotten; but that it's not like to be,' said the Doctor, plucking up courage. 'Here's our friend the Captain has heard it; and the mistake he has made shows there's one thing worse than its being quite remembered, and that is, its being *half* remembered. We can't stop people talking; and a story like that will see us all off the hooks, and be in folks' mouths as strong as ever.'

'Ay; and now I think on it, 'twas Dick Harman that has the boat down there—an old tar like myself—that told me that yarn. I was trying for pike, and he pulled me over the place, and that's how I came to hear it.—I say, Tom, my hearty, serve us out another glass of brandy, will you?' shouted the Captain's voice as the waiter crossed the room; and that florid and grizzled naval hero clapped his leg again on the chair by its wooden companion, which he was wont to call his jury-mast.

'Well, I do believe it will be spoke of longer than we are like to hear; and I don't much matter the story, if it baint told o' the wrong man.' Here he touched his tumbler with the spoon, indicating by that little ring that Tom, who had returned with the Captain's grog, was to replenish it with punch. 'And Sir Bale is like to be a friend to this house. I don't see no reason why he shouldn't. The George and Dragon has bin in our family ever since the reign of King Charles the Second. It was William Turnbull in that time, which they called it the Restoration, he taking the lease from Sir Tony Mardykes that was then. They was but knights then. They was made baronets first in the reign of King George the Second; you may see it in the list of the baronets and the nobility. The lease was made to William Turnbull, which came from London; and he built the stables, which they was out o' repair, as you may read to this day in the lease; and the house has never had but one sign since—the George and Dragon, it is pretty well known in England—and one name to its master. It has been owned by a Turnbull from that day to this, and they have not been counted bad men.' A murmur of applause testified the assent of his guests. 'They has been steady church-goin' folk, and brewed good drink, and maintained the best o' characters, hereaways and farther off too, though 'tis I, Richard Turnbull, that says it; and while they pay their rent, no man has power to put them out; for their title's as good to the George and Dragon, and the two fields, and the croft, and the grazing o' their kye on the green, as Sir Bale Mardykes to the Hall up there and estate. So 'tis nout to me, except in the way o' friendliness, what the family may think o' me; only the George and they has always been kind and friendly, and I don't want to break the old custom.'

'Well said, Dick!' exclaimed Doctor Torvey; 'I hold to your conclusion; but there ain't a soul here but ourselves—and we're all friends, and you are your own master—and, hang it, you'll tell us that story about the drowned woman, as you heard it from your father long ago.'

'Ay, do, and keep us to our liquor, my hearty!' cried the Captain.

Mr. Peers looked his entreaty; and deaf Mr. Hollar, having no interest in the petition, was at least a safe witness, and, with his pipe in his lips, a cozy piece of furniture.

Richard Turnbull had his punch beside him; he looked over his shoulder. The door was closed, the fire was cheery, and the punch was fragrant, and all friendly faces about him. So said he:

'Gentlemen, as you're pleased to wish it, I don't see no great harm in it; and at any rate, 'twill prevent mistakes. It is more than ninety years since. My father was but a boy then; and many a time I heard him tell it in this very room.'

And looking into his glass he mused, and stirred his punch slowly.

CHAPTER II.

THE DROWNED WOMAN.

'IT ain't much of a homminy,' said the host of the George. 'I'll not keep you long over it, gentlemen. There was a handsome young lady, Miss Mary Feltram o' Cloostedd by name. She was the last o' that family; they had gone very poor. There's but the walls o' the house left now: grass growing in the hall, and ivy over the gables; there's no one livin' has ever hard tell o' smoke out o' they chimblies. It stands on t'other side o' the lake, on the level, wi' a deal o' a'ad trees behint and aside it, at the gap o' the clough, under the pike o' Maiden Fells. Ye may see it wi' a spyin'-glass from the boat-bield at Mardykes Hall.'

'I've been there fifty times,' said the Doctor.

'Well, there was dealin's betwixt the two families; and there's good and bad in every family; but the Mardykes, in them days, was a wild lot. And when old Feltram o' Cloostedd died, and the young lady his daughter was left a ward o' Sir Jasper Mardykes—an ill day for her, poor lass!—twenty year older than her he was, an' more; and nothin' about him, they say, to make any one like or love him, ill-faur'd and little and dow.'

'Dow—that's gloomy,' Doctor Torvey instructed the Captain, aside.

'But, they do say, they has an old blud-stean ring in the family that has a charm in't; and happen how it might, the poor lass fell in love wi' him. Some said they was married. Some said it hang'd i' the bell-ropes, and never had the priest's blessing; but anyhow, married or no, there was talk enough amang the folk, and out o' doors she would na budge. And there was two wee barns; and she prayed him hard to confess the marriage, poor thing! But 'twas a bootlese bene, and he would not allow they should bear his name, but their mother's; he was a hard man, and hed the bit in his teeth, and went his ain gait. And having tired of her, he took in his head to marry a lady of the Barnets, and it behoved him to be shut o' her and her children; and so she nor them was seen no more at Mardykes Hall. And the eldest, a boy, was left in care of my grandfather's father here in the George.'

'That queer Philip Feltram that's travelling with Sir Bale so long is a descendant of his?' said the Doctor.

'Grandson,' observed Mr. Peers, removing his pipe for a moment; 'and he is the last of that stock.'

'Well, no one could tell where she was gone to. Some said to distant parts, some said to the madhouse, some one thing, some another; but neither she nor the barn was ever seen or spoke to by the folk at Mardykes in life again. There was one Mr. Wigram that lived in them times down at Moultry, and had sarved, like the Captain here, in the king's navy in his day; and early of a morning down he comes to the town here for a boat, sayin' he was looking toward Snakes Island through his spyin'-glass, and he seen a woman about a hundred and fifty yards outside of it; the Captain here has heard the bearings right enough. From her hips upward she was stark and straight out o' the water, and a baby in her arms. Well, no one else could see it, nor he neither, when they went down to the boat. But next morning he saw the same thing, and the boatman saw it too; and they rowed for it, both pulling might and main; but after a mile or so they could see it no more, and gave over. The next that saw it was the vicar, I forget his name now—but he was up the lake to a funeral at Mortlock Church; and coming back by moonlight with a bit of a sail up, just passin' Snakes Island, what should they hear on a sudden but a wowl like a death-cry, shrill and bleak, as made the very blood hoot in their veins; and looking along the water not a hundred yards away, they saw the same grizzled sight in the moonlight; so they turned the tiller, and came near enough to see her face—blea it was, and drenched wi' water—and she was above the lake to her middle, stiff as a post, holdin' the weeny barn out to them, and flyrin' [smiling scornfully] on them as they drew nigh her. They were half-frighted, not knowing what to make of it; but passing as close as the boatman could bring her side, the vicar stretched over the gunwale to catch her, and she bent forward, pushing the dead bab forward; and as she did, on a sudden she gave another yell that scared them, and they saw her no more. 'Twas no livin' woman, for she couldn't rise that height above the water, as they well knew when they came to think; and they knew it was a dobby they saw; and ye may be sure they didn't spare prayer and blessin', and went on their course straight before the wind; for neither would a-took the worth o' all Mardykes to look sich a freetin' i' the face again. 'Twas seen another time by market-folk crossin' fra Gyllenston in the self-same place; and Snakes Island got a bad neam, and none cared to go nar it after nightfall.'

'Do you know anything of that Feltram that has been with him abroad?' asked the Doctor.

'They say he's no good at anything—a harmless mafflin; he was a lang gaumless gawky when he went awa,' said Richard Turnbull. 'The Feltrams and the Mardykes was sib, ye know; and that made what passed in the misfortune o' that young lady spoken of all the harder; and this poor young man ye speak of is grandson o' the lad that was put here in care o' my grandfather.'

'*Great*-grandson. His father was grandson,' said Mr. Peers; 'he held a commission in the army, and died in the West Indies. This Philip Feltram is the last of that line—illegitimate, you know, it is held—and the little that remained of the Feltram property went nearly fourscore years ago to the Mardykes, and this Philip is maintained by Sir Bale; it is pleasant, notwithstanding all the stories one hears, gentlemen, that the only thing we know of him for certain should be so creditable to his kindness.'

'To be sure,' acquiesced Mr. Turnbull.

While they talked, the horn sounded, and the mail-coach drew up at the door of the George and Dragon to set down a passenger and his luggage.

Dick Turnbull rose and went out to the hall with careful bustle, and Doctor Torvey followed as far as the door, which commanded a view of it, and saw several trunks cased in canvas pitched into the hall, and by careful Tom and a boy lifted one on top of the other, behind the corner of the banister. It would have been below the dignity of his cloth to go out and read the labels on these, or the Doctor would have done otherwise, so great was his curiosity.

CHAPTER III.

PHILIP FELTRAM.

THE new guest was now in the hall of the George, and Doctor Torvey could hear him talking with Mr. Turnbull. Being himself one of the dignitaries of Golden Friars, the Doctor, having regard to first impressions, did not care to be seen in his post of observation; and closing the door gently, returned to his chair by the fire, and in an under-tone informed his cronies that there was a new arrival in the George, and he could not hear, but would not wonder if he were taking a private room; and he seemed to have trunks enough to build a church with.

'Don't be too sure we haven't Sir Bale on board,' said Amerald, who would have followed his crony the Doctor to the door—for never was retired naval hero of a village more curious than he—were it not that his wooden leg made a distinct pounding on the floor that was inimical, as experience had taught him, to mystery.

'That can't be,' answered the Doctor; 'Charley Twyne knows everything about it, and has a letter every second day; and there's no chance of Sir Bale before the tenth; this is a tourist, you'll find. I don't know what the d—l keeps Turnbull; he knows well enough we are all naturally anxious to hear who it is.'

'Well, he won't trouble us here, I bet ye;' and catching deaf Mr. Hollar's eye, the Captain nodded, and pointed to the little table beside him, and made a gesture imitative of the rattling of a dice-box; at which that quiet old gentleman nodded also sunnily; and up got the Captain and conveyed the backgammon-box to the table, near Hollar's elbow, and the two worthies were soon sincducing and catre-acing, with the pleasant clatter that accompanies that ancient game. Hollar had thrown sixes and made his double point, and the honest Captain, who could stand many things better than Hollar's throwing such throws so early in the evening, cursed his opponent's luck and sneered at his play, and called the company to witness, with a distinctness which a stranger to smiling Hollar's deafness would have thought hardly civil; and just at this moment the door opened, and Richard Turnbull showed his new guest into the room, and ushered him to a vacant seat near the other corner of the table before the fire.

The stranger advanced slowly and shyly, with something a little deprecatory in his air, to which a lathy figure, a slight stoop, and a very gentle and even heart-broken look in his long pale face, gave a more marked character of shrinking and timidity.

He thanked the landlord aside, as it were, and took his seat with a furtive glance round, as if he had no right to come in and intrude upon the happiness of these honest gentlemen.

He saw the Captain scanning him from under his shaggy gray eyebrows while he was pretending to look only at his game; and the Doctor was able to recount to Mrs. Torvey when he went home every article of the stranger's dress.

It was odd and melancholy as his peaked face.

He had come into the room with a short black cloak on, and a rather tall foreign felt hat, and a pair of shiny leather gaiters or leggings on his thin legs; and altogether presented a general resemblance to the conventional figure of Guy Fawkes.

Not one of the company assembled there knew the appearance of the Baronet. The Doctor and old Mr. Peers remembered something of his looks; and certainly they had no likeness, but the reverse, to those presented by the new-comer. The Baronet, as now described by people who had chanced to see him, was a dark man, not above the middle size, and with a certain decision in his air and talk; whereas this person was tall, pale, and in air and manner feeble. So this broken trader in the world's commerce, with whom all seemed to have gone wrong, could not possibly be he.

Presently, in one of his stealthy glances, the Doctor's eye encountered that of the stranger, who was by this time drinking his tea—a thin and feminine liquor little used in that room.

The stranger did not seem put out; and the Doctor, interpreting his look as a permission to converse, cleared his voice, and said urbanely,

'We have had a little frost by night down here, sir, and a little fire is no great harm—it is rather pleasant, don't you think?'

The stranger bowed acquiescence with a transient wintry smile, and looked gratefully on the fire.

'This place is a good deal admired, sir, and people come a good way to see it; you have been here perhaps before?'

'Many years ago.'

Here was another pause.

'Places change imperceptibly—in detail, at least—a good deal,' said the Doctor, making an effort to keep up a conversation that plainly would not go on of itself; 'and people too; population shifts—there's an old fellow, sir, they call *Death*.'

'And an old fellow they call the *Doctor*, that helps him,' threw in the Captain humorously, allowing his attention to get entangled in the conversation, and treating them to one of his tempestuous ha-ha-ha's.

'We are expecting the return of a gentleman who would be a very leading member of our little society down here,' said the Doctor, without noticing the Captain's joke. 'I mean Sir Bale Mardykes. Mardykes Hall is a pretty object from the water, sir, and a very fine old place.'

The melancholy stranger bowed slightly, but rather in courtesy to the relator, it seemed, than that the Doctor's lore interested him much.

'And on the opposite side of the lake,' continued Doctor Torvey, 'there is a building that contrasts very well with it—the old house of the Feltrams—quite a ruin now, at the mouth of the glen—Cloostedd House, a very picturesque object.'

'Exactly opposite,' said the stranger dreamily, but whether in the tone of acquiescence or of interrogatory, the Doctor could not be quite sure.

'That was one of our great families down here that has disappeared. It has dwindled down to nothing.'

'Duce ace,' remarked Mr. Hollar, who was attending to his game.

'While others have mounted more suddenly and amazingly still,' observed gentle Mr. Peers, who was great upon county genealogies.

'Sizes!' thundered the Captain, thumping the table with an oath of disgust.

'And Snakes Island is a very pretty object; they say there used to be snakes there,' said the Doctor, enlightening the visitor.

'Ah! that's a mistake,' said the dejected guest, making his first original observation. 'It should be spelt *Snaiks*. In the old papers it is called Sen-aiks Island, from the seven oaks that grew in a clump there.'

'Hey? that's very curious, egad! I daresay,' said the Doctor, set right thus by the stranger, and eyeing him curiously.

'Very true, sir,' observed Mr. Peers; 'three of those oaks, though, two of them little better than stumps, are there still; and Clewson of Heckleston has an old document—'

Here, unhappily, the landlord entered the room in a fuss, and walking up to the stranger, said, 'The chaise is at the door, Mr. Feltram, and the trunks up, sir.'

Mr. Feltram rose quietly and took out his purse, and said,

'I suppose I had better pay at the bar?'

'As you like best, sir,' said Richard Turnbull.

Mr. Feltram bowed all round to the gentlemen, who smiled, ducked, or waved their hands; and the Doctor fussily followed him to the hall-door, and welcomed him back to Golden Friars—there was real kindness in this welcome—and proffered his broad brown hand, which Mr. Feltram took; and then he plunged into his chaise, and the door being shut, away he glided, chaise, horses, and driver, like shadows, by the margin of the moonlighted lake, towards Mardykes Hall.

And after a minute's stand upon the steps, looking along the shadowy track of the chaise, they returned to the glow of the room, in which a pleasant perfume of punch still prevailed; and beside Mr. Philip Feltram's deserted tea-things, the host of the George enlightened his guests by communicating freely the little he had picked up. The principal fact he had to tell was, that Sir Bale adhered strictly to his original plan, and was to arrive on the tenth. A few days would bring them to that, and the nine-days wonder run its course and lose its interest. But in the mean time, all Golden Friars was anxious to see what Sir Bale Mardykes was like.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BARONET APPEARS.

As the candles burn blue and the air smells of brimstone at the approach of the Evil One, so, in the quiet and healthy air of Golden Friars, a depressing and agitating influence announced the coming of the long-absent Baronet.

From abroad, no good whatever had been at any time heard of him, and a great deal that was, in the ears of simple folk living in that unsophisticated part of the world, vaguely awful.

Stories that travel so far, however, lose something of their authority, as well as definiteness, on the way; there was always room for charity to suggest a mistake or exaggeration; and if good men turned up their hands and eyes after a new story, and ladies of experience, who knew mankind, held their heads high and looked grim and mysterious at mention of his name, nevertheless an interval of silence softened matters a little, and the sulphureous perfume dissipated itself in time.

Now that Sir Bale Mardykes had arrived at the Hall, there were hurried consultations held in many households. And though he was tried and sentenced by drum-head over some austere hearths, as a rule the law of gravitation prevailed, and the greater house drew the lesser about it, and country people within the visiting radius paid their respects at the Hall.

The Reverend Martin Bedel, the then vicar of Golden Friars, a stout short man, with a mulberry-coloured nose and small gray eyes, and taciturn habits, called and entered the drawing-room at Mardykes Hall, with his fat and garrulous wife on his arm.

The drawing-room had a great projecting Tudor window looking out on the lake, with its magnificent back-ground of furrowed and purple mountains.

Sir Bale was not there, and Mrs. Bedel examined the pictures, and ornaments, and the books, making such remarks as she saw fit; and then she looked out of the window, and admired the prospect. She wished to stand well with the Baronet, and was in a mood to praise everything.

You may suppose she was curious to see him, having heard for years such strange tales of his doings.

She expected the hero of a brilliant and wicked romance ; and listened for the step of the truant Lovelace who was to fulfil her idea of manly beauty and fascination.

She sustained a slight shock when he did appear.

Sir Bale Mardykes was, as she might easily have remembered, a middle-aged man—and he looked it. He was not even an imposing-looking man for his time of life : he was of about the middle height, slightly made, and dark featured. She had expected something of the gaiety and animation of Versailles, and an evident cultivation of the art of pleasing. What she did see was a remarkable gravity, not to say gloom, of countenance—the only feature of which that struck her being a pair of large dark-gray eyes, that were cold and earnest. His manners had the ease of perfect confidence ; and his talk and air were those of a person who might have known how to please, if it were worth the trouble, but who did not care twopence whether he pleased or not.

He made them each a bow, courtly enough, but there was no smile—not even an affectation of cordiality. Sir Bale, however, was chatty, and did not seem to care much what he said, or what people thought of him ; and there was a suspicion of sarcasm in what he said that the rustic literality of good Mrs. Bedel did not always detect.

'I believe I have not a clergyman but *you*, sir, within any reasonable distance ?'

'Golden Friars *is* the nearest,' said Mrs. Bedel, answering, as was her pleasure on all practicable occasions, for her husband. 'And southwards, the nearest is Wyllarden—and by a bird's flight that is thirteen miles and a half, and by the road more than nineteen—twenty, I may say, by the road. Ha, ha, ha ! it is a long way to look for a clergyman.'

'Twenty miles of road to carry you thirteen miles across, hey? The road-makers lead you a pretty dance here; those gentlemen know how to make money, and like to show people the scenery from a variety of points. No one likes a straight road but the man who pays for it, and who, when he travels, is brute enough to wish to get to his journey's end.'

'That is so true, Sir Bale; one never cares if one is not in a hurry. That's what Martin thinks—don't we, Martin?—And then, you know, coming home is the time you *are* in a hurry—when you are thinking of your cup of tea and the children; and *then*, you know, you have the fall of the ground all in your favour.'

'It's well to have anything in your favour in this place. And so there are children?'

'A good many,' said Mrs. Bedel, with a proud and mysterious smile, and a nod; 'you wouldn't guess how many.'

'Not I; I only wonder you did not bring them all.'

'That's very good-natured of you, Sir Bale, but all could not come at *one* bout; there are—tell him, Martin—ha, ha, ha! there are eleven.'

'It must be very cheerful down at the vicarage,' said Sir Bale graciously; and turning to the vicar he added, 'But how unequally blessings are divided! you have eleven, and I not one—that I'm aware of.'

'And then, in that direction straight before you, you have the lake, and then the fells; and five miles from the foot of the mountain at the other side, before you reach Fottrell—and that is twenty-five miles by the road—'

'Dear me! how far apart they are set! My gardener told me this morning that asparagus grows very thinly in this part of the world. How thinly clergymen grow also down here—in one sense,' he added politely, for the vicar was stout.

'We were looking out of the window—we amused ourselves that way before you came—and your view is certainly the very best anywhere round this side; your view of the lake and the fells—what mountains they are, Sir Bale!'

''Pon my soul, they are! I wish I could blow them asunder with a charge of duck-shot, and I shouldn't be stifled by them long. But I suppose, as we can't get rid of them, the next best thing is to admire them. We are pretty well married to them, and there is no use in quarrelling.'

'I know you don't think so, Sir Bale, ha, ha, ha! You wouldn't take a good deal and spoil Mardykes Hall.'

'You can't get a mouthful of air, or see the sun of a morning, for those frightful mountains,' he said with a peevish frown at them.

'Well, the lake at all events—that you *must* admire, Sir Bale?'

'No, ma'am, I don't admire the lake. I'd drain the lake if I could—I hate the lake. There's nothing so gloomy as a lake pent up among barren mountains. I can't conceive what possessed my people to build our house down here, at the edge of a lake; unless it was the fish, and precious fish it is—pike! I don't know how people digest it—*I* can't. I'd as soon think of eating a watchman's pike.'

'I thought that having travelled so much abroad, you would have acquired a great liking for that kind of scenery, Sir Bale; there is a great deal of it on the Continent, ain't there?' said Mrs. Bedel. 'And the boating.'

'Boating, my dear Mrs. Bedel, is the dullest of all things; don't you think so? Because a boat looks very pretty from the shore, we fancy the shore must look very pretty from a boat; and when we try it, we find we have only got down into a pit and can see nothing rightly. For my part I hate boating, and I hate the water; and I'd rather have my house, like Haworth, at the edge of a moss, with good wholesome peat to look at, and an open horizon—savage and stupid and bleak as all that is—than be suffocated among impassable mountains, or upset in a black lake and drowned like a kitten. O, there's luncheon in the next room; won't you take some?'

Chapter V.

MRS. JULAPER'S ROOM.

Sir Bale Mardykes being now established in his ancestral house, people had time to form conclusions respecting him. It must be allowed he was not popular. There was, perhaps, in his conduct something of the caprice of contempt. At all events his temper and conduct were uncertain, and his moods sometimes violent and insulting.

With respect to but one person was his conduct uniform, and that was Philip Feltram. He was a sort of aide-de-camp near Sir Bale's person, and chargeable with all commissions and offices which could not be suitably intrusted to a mere servant. But in many respects he was treated worse than any servant of the Baronet's. Sir Bale swore at him, and cursed him; laid the blame of everything that went wrong in house, stable, or field upon his shoulders; railed at him, and used him, as people said, worse than a dog.

Why did Feltram endure this contumelious life? What could he do but endure it? was the answer. What was the power that induced strong soldiers to put off their jackets and shirts, and present their hands to be tied up, and tortured for hours, it might be, under the scourge, with an air of ready volition? The moral coercion of despair; the result of an unconscious calculation of chances which satisfies them that it is ultimately better to do all that, bad as it is, than try the alternative. These unconscious calculations are going on every day with each of us, and the results embody themselves in our lives; and no one knows that there has been a process and a balance struck, and that what they see, and very likely blame, is by the fiat of an invisible but quite irresistible power.

A man of spirit would rather break stones on the highway than eat that bitter bread, was the burden of every man's song on Feltram's bondage. But he was not so sure that even the stonebreaker's employment was open to him, or. that he could break stones well enough to retain it on a fair trial. And he had other ideas of providing for himself, and a different alternative in his mind.

Good-natured Mrs. Julaper, the old housekeeper at Mardykes Hall, was kind to Feltram, as to all others who lay in her way and were in affliction.

She was one of those good women whom Nature provides to receive the burden of other people's secrets, as the reeds did long ago, only that no chance wind could steal them away, and send them singing into strange ears.

You may still see her snuggery in Mardykes Hall, though the housekeeper's room is now in a different part of the house.

Mrs. Julaper's room was in the oldest quarter of that old house. It was wainscoted, in black panels, up to the ceiling, which was stuccoed over in the fanciful diagrams of James the First's time. Several dingy portraits, banished from time to time from other statelier rooms, found a temporary abode in this quiet spot, where they had come finally to settle and drop out of remembrance. There is a lady in white satin and a ruff; a gentleman whose legs have faded out of view, with a peaked beard, and a hawk on his wrist. There is another in a black periwig lost in the dark back-ground, and with a steel cuirass, the gleam of which out of the darkness strikes the eye, and a scarf is dimly discoverable across it. This is that foolish Sir Guy Mardykes, who crossed the Border and joined Dundee, and was shot through the temple at Killiecrankie, and whom more prudent and whiggish scions of the Mardykes family removed forthwith from his place in the Hall, and found him a retirement here, from which he has not since emerged.

At the far end of this snug room is a second door, on opening which you find yourself looking down upon the great kitchen, with a little balcony before you, from which the housekeeper used to issue her commands to the cook, and exercise a sovereign supervision.

There is a shelf here on which Mrs. Julaper had her Bible, her *Whole Duty of Man*, and her *Pilgrim's Progress;* and, in a file beside them, her books of housewifery, and among them volumes of MS. recipes, cookery-books, and some too on surgery and medicine, as practised by the Ladies Bountiful of the Elizabethan age, for which an antiquarian would nowadays give an eye or a hand.

Gentle half-foolish Philip Feltram would tell the story of his wrongs, and weep and wish he was dead; and kind Mrs. Julaper, who remembered him a child, would comfort him with cold pie and cherry-brandy, or a cup of coffee, or some little dainty.

'O, ma'am, I'm tired of my life. What's the good of living, if a poor devil is never let alone, and called worse names than a dog? Would not it be better, Mrs. Julaper, to be dead? Wouldn't it be better, ma'am? I think so; I think it night and day. I'm always thinking the same thing. I don't care, I'll just tell him what I think, and have it off my mind. I'll tell him I can't live and bear it longer.'

'There now, don't you be frettin'; but just sip this, and remember you're not to judge a friend by a wry word. He does not mean it, not he. They all had a rough side to their tongue now and again; but no one minded that. I don't, nor you needn't, no more than other folk; for the tongue, be it never so bitin', it can't draw blood, mind ye, and hard words break no bones; and I'll make a cup o' tea—ye like a cup o' tea—and we'll take a cup together, and ye'll chirp up a bit, and see how pleasant and ruddy the sun shines in the lake this evening.'

She was patting him gently on the shoulder, as she stood slim and stiff in her dark silk by his chair, and her rosy little face smiled down on him. She was, for an old woman, wonderfully pretty still. What a delicate skin she must have had! The wrinkles were etched upon it with so fine a needle, you scarcely could see them a little way off; and as she smiled her cheeks looked fresh and smooth as two ruddy little apples.

'Look out, I say,' and she nodded towards the window, deep set in the thick wall. 'See how bright and soft everything looks in that pleasant light; *that's* better, child, than the finest picture man's hand ever painted yet, and God gives it us for nothing; and how pretty Snakes Island glows up in that light!'

The dejected man, hardly raising his head, followed with his eyes the glance of the old woman, and looked mournfully through the window.

'That island troubles me, Mrs. Julaper.'

'Everything troubles you, my poor goose-cap. I'll pull your lug for ye, child, if ye be so dowly;' and with a mimic pluck the good-natured old housekeeper pinched his ear and laughed.

'I'll go to the still-room now, where the water's boiling, and I'll make a cup of tea; and if I find ye so dow when I come back, I'll throw it all out o' the window, mind.'

It was indeed a beautiful picture that Feltram saw in its deep frame of old masonry. The near part of the lake was flushed all over with the low western light; the more distant waters lay dark in the shadow of the mountains; and against this shadow of purple the rocks on Snakes Island, illuminated by the setting sun, started into sharp clear light.

But this beautiful view had no charm—at least, none powerful enough to master the latent horror associated with its prettiest feature—for the weak and dismal man who was looking at it; and being now alone, he rose and leant on the window, and looked out, and then with a kind of shudder clutching his hands together, and walking distractedly about the room.

Without his perceiving, while his back was turned, the housekeeper came back; and seeing him walking in this distracted way, she thought to herself, as he leant again upon the window:

'Well, it *is* a burning shame to worrit any poor soul into that state. Sir Bale was always down on someone or something, man or beast; there always was something he hated, and could never let alone. It was not pretty; it was his nature. Happen, poor fellow, he could not help it; but so it was.'

A maid came in and set the tea-things down; and Mrs. Julaper drew her sad guest over by the arm, and made him sit down, and she said: 'What has a man to do, frettin' in that way? By Jen, I'm ashamed o' ye, Master Philip! Ye like three lumps o' sugar, I think, and—look cheerful, ye must!—a good deal o' cream?'

'You're so kind, Mrs. Julaper, you're so cheery. I feel quite comfortable after awhile when I'm with you; I feel quite happy,' and he began to cry.

She understood him very well by this time, and took no notice, but went on chatting gaily, and made his tea as he liked it; and he dried up his tears hastily, thinking she had not observed.

So the clouds began to clear. This innocent fellow liked nothing better than a cup of tea and a chat with gentle and cheery old Mrs. Julaper, and a talk in which the shadowy old times which he remembered as a child emerged into sunlight and lived again.

When he began to feel better, drawn into the kindly old times by the tinkle of that harmless old woman's tongue, he said:

'I sometimes think I would not so much mind—I should not care so much—if my spirits were not so much depressed, and I so agitated. I suppose I am not quite well.'

'Well, tell me what's wrong, child, and it's odd but I have a recipe on the shelf there that will do you good.'

'It is not a matter of that sort I mean; though I'd rather have you than any doctor, if I needed medicine, to prescribe for me.'

Mrs. Julaper smiled in spite of herself, well pleased; for her skill in pharmacy was a point on which the good lady prided herself, and was open to flattery, which, without intending it, the simple fellow administered.

'No, I'm well enough; I can't say I ever was better. It is only, ma'am, that I have such dreams—you have no idea.'

'There are dreams and dreams, my dear: there's some signifies no more than the babble of the lake down there on the pebbles, and there's others that has a meaning; there's dreams that is but vanity, and there's dreams that is good, and dreams that is bad. Lady Mardykes—heavens be her bed this day! that's his grandmother I mean—was very sharp for reading dreams. Take another cup of tea. Dear me! what a noise the crows keep aboon our heads, going home! and how high they wing it!—that's a sure sign of fine weather. An' what do you dream about? tell me your dream, and I may show you it's a good one, after all. For many a dream is ugly to see and ugly to tell, and a good dream, with a happy meaning, for all that.'

CHAPTER VI.

THE INTRUDER.

'WELL, Mrs. Julaper, dreams I've dreamed like other people, old and young; but this, ma'am, has taken a fast hold of me,' said Mr. Feltram dejectedly, leaning back in his chair and looking down with his hands in his pockets. 'I think, Mrs. Julaper, it is getting into me. I think it's like possession.'

'Possession, child! what do you mean?'

'I think there is something trying to influence me. Perhaps it is the way fellows go mad; but it won't let me alone. I've seen it three times, think of that!'

'Well, dear, and what *have* ye seen?' she asked with an uneasy cheerfulness, smiling, with eyes fixed steadily upon him; for the idea of a madman—even gentle Philip in that state—was not quieting.

'Do you remember the picture, full-length, that had no frame—the lady in the white-satin saque—she was beautiful, *funeste*,' he added, talking more to himself; and then more distinctly to Mrs. Julaper again—'in the white-satin saque; and with the little mob-cap and blue ribbons to it, and a bouquet in her fingers; that was—that—you know who she was?'

'That was your great-grandmother, my dear,' said Mrs. Julaper, lowering her eyes. 'It was a dreadful pity it was spoiled. The boys in the pantry had it for a year there on the table for a tray, to wash the glasses on and the like. It was a shame; that was the prettiest picture in the house, with the gentlest, rosiest face.'

'It ain't so gentle or rosy now, I can tell you,' said Philip. 'As fixed as marble; with thin lips, and a curve at the nostril. Do you remember the woman that was found dead in the clough, when I was a boy, that the gipsies murdered, it was thought,—a cruel-looking woman?'

'Agoy! Master Philip dear! ye would not name that terrible-looking creature with the pretty, fresh, kindly face!'

'Faces change, you see; no matter what she's like; it's her talk that frightens me. She wants to make use of me; and, you see, it is like getting a share in my mind, and a voice in my thoughts, and a command over me gradually; and it is just one idea, as straight as a line of light across the lake—see what she's come to. O Lord, help me!'

'Well, now, don't you be talkin' like that. It is just a little bit dowly and troubled, because the master says a wry word now and then; and so ye let your spirits go down, don't ye see, and all sorts o' fancies comes into your head.'

'There's no fancy in my head,' he said with a quick look of suspicion; 'only you asked me what I dreamed. I don't care if all the world knew. I dreamed I went down steps into the lake, and got a message. There are no steps near Snakes Island, we all know that,' and he laughed chillily. 'I'm out of spirits, as you say; and—and—O dear! I wish—Mrs. Julaper—I wish I was in my coffin, and quiet.'

'Now that's very wrong of you, Master Philip; you should think of all the blessings you have, and not be makin' mountains o' molehills; and those little bits o' temper Sir Bale shows, why, no one minds 'em—that is, to take 'em to heart like you do, don't ye see?'

'I daresay; I suppose, Mrs. Julaper, you are right. I'm unreasonable often, I know,' said gentle Philip Feltram. 'I daresay I make too much of it; I'll try. I'm his secretary, and I know I'm not so bright as he is, and it is natural he should sometimes be a little impatient; I ought to be more reasonable, I'm sure. It is all that thing that has been disturbing me—I mean fretting; and, I think, I'm not quite well; and—and letting myself think too much of vexations. It's my own fault, I'm sure, Mrs. Julaper; and I know I'm to blame.'

'That's quite right, that's spoken like a wise lad; only I don't say you're to blame, nor no one; for folk can't help frettin' sometimes, no more than they can help a headache—none but a mafflin would say that—and I'll not deny but he has dowly ways when the fit's on him, and he frumps us all round, if such be his humour. But who is there hasn't his faults? We must bear and forbear, and take what we get and be cheerful. So chirp up, my lad; Philip, didn't I often ring the a'ad rhyme in your ear long ago?

Be always as merry as ever you can,
For no one delights in a sorrowful man.

So don't ye be gettin' up off your chair like that, and tramping about the room wi' your hands in your pockets, looking out o' this window and staring out o' that, and sighing and crying, and looking so black-ox-trodden, 'twould break a body's heart to see you. Ye must be cheery; and happen you're hungry, and don't know it. I'll tell the cook to grill a hot bit for ye.'

'But I'm not hungry, Mrs. Julaper. How kind you are! dear me, Mrs. Julaper, I'm not worthy of it; I don't deserve half your kindness. I'd have been heart-broken long ago, but for you.'

'And I'll make a sup of something hot for you; you'll take a rummer-glass of punch—you must.'

'But I like the tea better; I do indeed, Mrs. Julaper.'

'Tea is no drink for a man when his heart's down. It should be something with a leg in it, lad; something hot that will warm your courage up for ye, and set your blood a-dancing, and make ye talk brave and merry; and will you have a bit of a broil first? No? Well then, you'll have a drop o' punch?—ye sha'n't say no.'

And so, all resistance overpowered, the consolation of Philip Feltram proceeded.

A gentler spirit than poor Feltram, a more good-natured soul than the old housekeeper, were nowhere among the children of earth.

Philip Feltram, who was reserved enough elsewhere, used to come into her room and cry, and take her by both hands piteously, standing before her and looking down in her face, while tears ran deviously down his cheeks.

'Did you ever know such a case? was there ever a fellow like *me*? did you ever *know* such a thing? You know what I am, Mrs. Julaper, and who I am. They call me Feltram; but Sir Bale knows as well as I that my true name is not that. I'm Philip Mardykes; and another fellow would make a row about it, and claim his name and his rights, as she is always croaking in my ear I ought. But you know that is not reasonable. My grandmother was married; she was the true Lady Mardykes; *think* what it was to see a woman like that turned out of doors, and her children robbed of their very name. O, ma'am, you *can't* think it; unless you were me, you couldn't—you couldn't—you couldn't!'

'Come, come, Master Philip, don't you be taking on so; and ye mustn't be talking like that, d'ye mind? You know he wouldn't stand that; and it's an old story now, and there's naught can be proved concerning it; and what I think is this—I wouldn't wonder the poor lady was beguiled. But anyhow she surely thought she was his lawful wife; and though the law may hev found a flaw somewhere—and I take it 'twas so—yet sure I am she was an honourable lady. But where's the use of stirring that old sorrow? or how can ye prove aught? and the dead hold their peace, you know; dead mice, they say, feels no cold; and dead folks are past fooling. So don't you talk like that; for stone walls have ears, and ye might say that ye couldn't *un*say; and death's day is doom's day. So leave all in the keeping of God; and, above all, never lift hand when ye can't strike.'

'Lift my hand! O, Mrs. Julaper, you couldn't think that; you little know me; I did not mean that; I never dreamed of hurting Sir Bale. Good heavens! Mrs. Julaper, you couldn't think *that!*

It all comes of my poor impatient temper, and complaining as I do, and my misery; but O, Mrs. Julaper, you could not think I ever meant to trouble him by law, or any other annoyance! I'd like to see a stain removed from my family, and my name restored; but to touch his property, O, no!—O, no! that never entered my mind; by heaven! that never entered my mind, Mrs. Julaper. I'm not cruel; I'm not rapacious; I don't care for money; don't you know that, Mrs. Julaper? O, surely you won't think me capable of attacking the man whose bread I have been eating so long! I never dreamed of it; I should hate myself. Tell me you don't believe it; O, Mrs. Julaper, say you don't!'

And the gentle feeble creature burst into tears, and good Mrs. Julaper comforted him with kind words; and he said,

'Thank you, ma'am; thank you. God knows I would not hurt Bale, nor give him one uneasy hour. It is only this: that I'm—I'm so miserable; and I'm only casting in my mind where to turn to, and what to do. So little a thing would be enough, and then I shall leave Mardykes. I'll go; not in any anger, Mrs. Julaper—don't think that; but I can't stay, I must be gone.'

'Well, now, there's nothing yet, Master Philip, to fret you like that. You should not be talking so wild-like. Master Bale has his sharp word and his short temper now and again; but I'm sure he likes you. If he didn't, he'd a-said so to me long ago. I'm sure he likes you well.'

'Hollo! I say, who's there? Where the devil's Mr. Feltram?' screamed the voice of the Baronet, at a fierce pitch, along the passage.

'La! Mr. Feltram, it's him! Ye'd better run to him,' whispered Mrs. Julaper.

'D—n me! does nobody hear? Mrs. Julaper! Hollo! ho! house, there! ho! D—n me, will nobody answer?'

And Sir Bale began to slap the wainscot fast and furiously with his walking-cane with a clatter like a harlequin's lath in a pantomime.

Mrs. Julaper, a little paler than usual, opened her door, and stood with the handle in hand, making a little curtsey, enframed in the door-case; and Sir Bale, being in a fume, when he saw her, ceased whacking the panels of the corridor, and stamped on the floor, crying,

'Upon my soul, ma'am, I'm glad to see you! Perhaps you can tell me where Feltram is?'

'He's in my room, Sir Bale. Shall I tell him you want him, please?'

'Never mind; thanks,' said the Baronet. 'I've a tongue in my head;' marching down the passage to the housekeeper's room, with his cane clutched hard, glaring savagely, and with his teeth fast set, like a fellow advancing to beat a vicious horse that has chafed his temper.

J. A. Pasquier, del. Edmund Evans, sc.

"SOMETHING WHITE COME OUT O' T' WATER."

THE HAUNTED BARONET

BY J. S. LE FANU,

AUTHOR OF 'UNCLE SILAS,' ETC.

CHAPTER VII. THE BANK-NOTE.

SIR BALE brushed by the housekeeper as he strode into her sanctuary, and there found Philip Feltram awaiting him dejectedly, but with no signs of agitation.

If one were to judge by the appearance the master of Mardykes presented, very grave surmises as to impending violence would have suggested themselves; but though he clutched his cane so hard that it quivered in his grasp, he had no notion of committing the outrage of a blow. The Baronet was unusually angry notwithstanding, and stopping short about three steps away, addressed Feltram with a pale face and gleaming eyes. It was quite plain that there was something very exciting upon his mind.

'I've been looking for you, Mr. Feltram; I want a word or two, if you have done your—your—whatever it is.' He whisked the point of his stick towards the modest tea-tray. 'I should like five minutes in the library.'

The Baronet was all this time eyeing Feltram with a hard suspicious gaze, as if he expected to read in his face the shrinkings and trepidations of guilt; and then turning suddenly on his heel he led the way to his library—a good long march, with a good many turnings. He walked very fast, and was not long in getting there. And as Sir Bale reached the hearth, on which was smouldering a great log of wood, and turned about suddenly, facing the door, Philip Feltram entered.

The Baronet looked oddly and stern—so oddly, it seemed to Feltram, that he could not take his eyes off him, and returned his grim and somewhat embarrassed gaze with a stare of alarm and speculation.

And so doing, his step was shortened, and grew slow and slower, and came quite to a stop before he had got far from the door—a wide stretch of that wide floor still intervening between him and Sir Bale, who stood upon the hearthrug, with his heels together and his back to the fire, cane in hand, like a drill-sergeant, facing him.

'Shut that door, please; that will do; come nearer now. I don't want to bawl what I have to say. Now listen.'

The Baronet cleared his voice and paused, with his eyes upon Feltram.

'It is only two or three days ago,' said he, 'that you said you wished you had a hundred pounds. Am I right?'

'Yes; I think so.'

'*Think?* you know it, sir, devilish well. You said that you wished to get away. I have nothing particular to say against that, more especially now. Do you understand what I say?'

'Understand, Sir Bale? I do, sir—quite.'

'I daresay *quite*,' he repeated with an angry sneer. 'Here, sir, is an odd coincidence: you want a hundred pounds, and you can't earn it, and you can't borrow it—there's another way, it seems—but I have got it—a Bank-of-England note of 100*l.*—locked up in that desk;' and he poked the end of his cane against the brass lock of it viciously. 'There it is, and there are the papers you work at; and there are two keys—I've got one and you have the other—and devil another key in or out of the house has any one living. Well, do you begin to see? Don't mind. I don't want any d—d lying about it.'

Feltram was indeed beginning to see that he was suspected of something very bad, but exactly what, he was not yet sure; and being a man of that unhappy temperament which shrinks from suspicion, as others do from detection, he looked very much put out indeed.

'Ha, ha! I think we do begin to see,' said Sir Bale savagely. 'It's a bore, I know, troubling a fellow with a story that he knows before; but I'll make mine short. When I take my key, intending to send the note to pay the crown and quit-rents that you know—you—you—no matter—you know well enough must be paid, I open it so—and so—and look *there*, where I left it, for my note; and the note's gone—you understand, the note's *gone!*'

Here was a pause, during which, under the Baronet's hard insulting eye, poor Feltram winced, and cleared his voice, and essayed to speak, but said nothing.

'It's gone, and we know where. Now, Mr. Feltram, *I* did not steal that note, and no one but you and I has access to this desk. You wish to go away, and I have no objection to that—but d—n me if you take away that note with you; and you may as well produce it now and here, as hereafter in a worse place.'

'O, my good heaven!' exclaimed poor Feltram at last. 'I'm very ill.'

'So you are, of course. It takes a stiff emetic to get all that money off a fellow's stomach; and it's like parting with a tooth to give up a bank-note. Of course you're ill, but that's no sign of innocence, and I'm no fool. You had better give the thing up quietly.'

'May my Maker strike me—'

'So He will, you d—d rascal, if there's justice in heaven, unless you produce the money. I don't want to hang you. I'm willing to let you off if you'll let me, but I'm cursed if I let my note off along with you; and unless you give it up forthwith, I'll get a warrant and have you searched, pockets, bag, and baggage.'

'Lord! am I awake?' exclaimed Philip Feltram.

'Wide awake, and so am I,' replied Sir Bale. 'You don't happen to have got it about you?'

'God forbid, sir! O, Sir—O, Sir Bale—why, Bale, *Bale*, it's impossible! You *can't* believe it. When did I ever wrong you? You knew me since I was not higher than the table, and—and—'

He burst into tears.

'Stop your snivelling, sir, and give-up the note. You know devilish well I can't spare it; and I won't spare you if you put me to it. I've said my say.'

Sir Bale signed towards the door; and like a somnambulist, with dilated gaze and pale as death, Philip Feltram, at his wit's end, went out of the room. It was not till he had again reached the housekeeper's door that he recollected in what direction he was going. His shut hand was pressed with all his force to his heart, and the first breath he was conscious of was a deep wild sob or two that quivered from his heart as he looked from the lobby-window upon a landscape which he did not see.

All he had ever suffered before was mild in comparison with this dire paroxysm. Now, for the first time, was he made acquainted with his real capacity for pain, and how near he might be to madness and yet retain intellect enough to weigh every scruple, and calculate every chance and consequence, in his torture.

Sir Bale, in the mean time, had walked out a little more excited than he would have allowed. He was still convinced that Feltram had stolen the note, but not quite so certain as he had been. There were things in his manner that confirmed, and others that perplexed, Sir Bale.

The Baronet stood upon the margin of the lake, almost under the evening shadow of the house, looking towards Snakes Island. There were two things about Mardykes he specially disliked.

One was Philip Feltram, who, right or wrong, he fancied knew more than was pleasant of his past life.

The other was the lake. It was a beautiful piece of water, his eye, educated at least in the excellences of landscape-painting, acknowledged. But although he could pull a good oar, and liked other lakes, to this particular sheet of water there lurked within him an insurmountable antipathy. It was engendered by a variety of associations.

There is a faculty in man that will acknowledge the unseen. He may scout and scare religion from him; but if he does, superstition perches near. His boding was made-up of omens, dreams, and such stuff as he most affected to despise, and there fluttered at his heart a presentiment and disgust.

His foot was on the gunwale of the boat, that was chained to its ring at the margin; but he would not have crossed that water in it for any reason that man could urge.

What was the mischief that sooner or later was to befall him from that lake, he could not define; but that some fatal danger lurked there, was the one idea concerning it that had possession of his fancy.

He was now looking along its still waters, towards the copse and rocks of Snakes Island, thinking of Philip Feltram; and the yellow level sunbeams touched his dark features, that bore a saturnine resemblance to those of Charles II., and marked sharply their firm grim lines, and left his deep-set eyes in shadow.

Who has the happy gift to seize the present, as a child does, and live in it? Who is not often looking far off for his happiness, as Sidney Smith says, like a man looking for his hat when it is upon his head? Sir Bale was brooding over his double hatred, of Feltram and of the lake. It would have been better had he struck down the raven that croaked upon his shoulder, and listened to the harmless birds that were whistling all round among the branches in the golden sunset.

Chapter VIII.

FELTRAM'S PLAN.

This horror of the beautiful lake, which other people thought so lovely, was, in that mind which affected to scoff at the unseen, a distinct creation of downright superstition.

The nursery tales which had scared him in his childhood were founded on the tragedy of Snakes Island, and haunted him with an unavowed persistence still. Strange dreams untold had visited him, and a German conjurer, who had made some strangely successful vaticinations, had told him that his worst enemy would come to him from a lake. He had heard very nearly the same thing from a fortune-teller in France; and once at Lucerne, when he was waiting alone in his room for the hour at which he had appointed to go upon the lake, all being quiet, there came to the window, which was open, a sunburnt, lean, wicked face. Its ragged owner leaned his arm on the window-frame, and with his head in the room, said in his patois, 'Ho! waiting are you? You'll have enough of the lake one day. Don't you mind watching; they'll send for you, my friend, when you're wanted;' and twisting his yellow face into a malicious distortion, he went on.

This thing had occurred so suddenly, and chimed-in so oddly with his thoughts, which were at that moment at distant Mardykes and the haunted lake, that it disconcerted him. He laughed, he looked out of the window. He would have given that fellow money to tell him why he said that. But there was no good in looking for the scamp; he was gone.

A memory not preoccupied with that lake and its omens, and a presentiment about himself, would not have noted such things. But *his* mind they touched indelibly; and he was ashamed of his childish slavery, but could not help it.

The foundation of all this had been laid in the nursery, in the winter's tales told by its fireside, and which seized upon his fancy and his fears with a strange congeniality.

There is a large bedroom at Mardykes Hall, which tradition assigns to the lady who had perished tragically in the lake. Mrs. Julaper was sure of it; for her aunt, who died a very old woman twenty years before, remembered the time of the lady's death, and when she grew to woman's estate had opportunity in abundance; for the old people who surrounded her could remember forty years farther back, and tell everything connected with the old house in beautiful Miss Feltram's time.

This large old-fashioned room, commanding a view of Snakes Island, the fells, and the lake—somewhat vast and gloomy, and furnished in a stately old fashion—was said to be haunted, especially when the wind blew from the direction of Golden Friars, the point from which it blew on the night of her death in the lake; or when the sky was overcast, and thunder rolled among the lofty fells, and lightning gleamed blue on the wide sheet of water.

It was on a night like this that a lady visitor, who long after that event occupied, in entire ignorance of its supernatural character, that large room; and being herself a lady of a picturesque turn, and loving the grander melodrama of Nature, bid her maid leave the shutters open, and watched the splendid effects from her bed, until, the storm being still distant, she fell asleep.

It was travelling slowly across the lake, and it was the deep-mouthed clangor of its near approach that startled her, at dead of night, from her slumber, to witness the same phenomena in the tremendous loudness and brilliancy of their near approach.

At this magnificent spectacle she was looking with the awful ecstasy of an observer in whom the sense of danger is subordinated to that of the sublime, when there came suddenly to the window a woman dishevelled, loosely clothed, and whose long hair and dress seemed drenched with water. She was gazing into the room with great eyes that seemed distended and wild with terror, and was shaking the sash of the window with an imploring vehemence that seemed to supplicate shelter. Having stood there for a few seconds, and before the lady who beheld all this from her bed could make up her mind what to do, the storm-beaten woman, wringing her hands, went swiftly away.

Possessed with the idea that she had seen some poor woman overtaken in the storm, who, failing to procure admission there, had gone round to some of the many doors of the mansion, and obtained an entry there, she again fell asleep.

It was not till the morning, when she went to her window to look out upon the now tranquil scene, that she discovered what, being a stranger to the house, she had quite forgotten, that this room was at a great height—some thirty feet—from the ground.

Another story was that of good old Mr. Randal Rymer, who was often a visitor at the house in the late Lady Mardykes' day. In his youth he had been a campaigner; and now that he was a preacher he maintained his hardy habits, and always slept, summer and winter, with a bit of his window up. Being in that room in his bed, and after a short sleep lying awake, the moon shining softly through the window, there passed by that aperture into the room a figure dressed, it seemed to him, in gray that was nearly white. It passed straight to the hearth, where was an expiring wood fire; and cowering over it with outstretched hands, it appeared to be cold and shivering, and gathering what little heat was to be had. Mr. Rymer, amazed and awestruck, made a movement in his bed; and the figure gave one look round, with large eyes that in the moonlight looked like melting snow, and stretching its long arms up the chimney, they and the figure itself seemed to blend with the smoke, and so pass up and away.

Sir Bale, I have said, did not like Feltram. His father, Sir William, had left a letter creating a trust, it was said, in favour of Philip Feltram. The document had been found with the will, addressed to Sir Bale in the form of a letter.

'That is mine,' said the Baronet, when it dropped out of the will; and he slipped it into his pocket, and no one ever saw it after.

But Mr. Charles Twyne, the attorney of Golden Friars, whenever he got drunk, which was pretty often, used to tell his friends with a grave wink that he knew a thing or two about that letter. It gave Philip Feltram two hundred a-year, charged on Harfax. It was only a direction. It made Sir Bale a trustee, however; and having made away with the 'letter,' the Baronet had been robbing Philip Feltram ever since.

Old Twyne was cautious, even in his cups, in his choice of an audience, and was a little enigmatical in his revelations. For he was afraid of Sir Bale, though he hated him for employing a lawyer who lived seven miles away, and was a rival of old Twyne's. So people were not quite sure whether Mr. Twyne was telling lies or truth, and the principal fact that corroborated his story was Sir

Bale's manifest hatred of his secretary. In fact, Sir Bale's retaining him in his house, detesting him as he seemed to do, was not easily to be accounted for, except on the principle of a tacit compromise—a miserable compensation for having robbed him of his rights.

The battle about the bank-note proceeded. Sir Bale certainly had doubts, and vacillated; for moral evidence made powerfully in favour of poor Feltram, though the evidence of circumstance made as powerfully against him. But Sir Bale admitted suspicion easily, and in weighing probabilities would count a virtue very lightly against temptation and opportunity; and whatever his doubts might sometimes be, he resisted and quenched them, and never let that ungrateful scoundrel Philip Feltram so much as suspect their existence.

For two days Sir Bale had not spoken to Feltram. He passed him by on stair and passage, carrying his head high, and with a thundrous countenance, rolling conclusions and revenges in his soul.

Poor Feltram all this time existed in one long agony. He would have left Mardykes, were it not that he looked vaguely to some just power—to chance itself—against this hideous imputation. To go with this indictment ringing in his ears, would amount to a confession and flight.

Mrs. Julaper consoled him with might and main. She was a sympathetic and trusting spirit, and knew poor Philip Feltram, in her simplicity, better than the shrewdest profligate on earth could have known him. She cried with him in his misery. She was fired with indignation by these suspicions, and still more at what followed.

Sir Bale showed no signs of relenting. It might have been that he was not very sorry that so unexceptionable an opportunity of getting rid of Feltram, who, people thought, knew something about him which it galled the Baronet's pride that he should know.

The Baronet had another shorter and sterner interview with Feltram in his study. The result was, that unless he restored the missing note before ten o'clock next morning, he should leave Mardykes.

To leave Mardykes was no more than Philip Feltram, feeble as he was of will, had already resolved. But what was to become of him? He did not very much care, if he could find any calling, however humble, that would just give him bread.

There was an old fellow and his wife (an ancient dame), who lived at the other side of the lake, on the old territories of the Feltrams, and who, from some tradition of loyalty, perhaps, were fond of poor Philip Feltram. They lived somewhat high up on the fells—about as high as trees would grow—and those which were clumped about their rude dwelling were nearly the last you passed in your ascent of the mountain. These people had a multitude of sheep and goats, and lived in their airy solitude a pastoral and simple life, and were childless. Philip Feltram was hardy and active, having passed his early days among that arduous scenery. Cold and rain did not trouble him; and these people being wealthy in their way, and loving him, would be glad to find him employment of that desultory pastoral kind which would best suit him.

This vague idea was the only thing resembling a plan in his mind.

When Philip Feltram came to Mrs. Julaper's room, and told her that he had made up his mind to leave the house forthwith—to cross the lake to the Cloostedd side in Tom Marlin's boat, and then to make his way up the hill alone to Trebeck's lonely farmstead, Mrs. Julaper was overwhelmed.

'Ye'll do no such thing to-night, anyhow. You're not to go like that. Ye'll come into the small room here, where he can't follow; and we'll sit down and talk it over a bit, and ye'll find 'twill all come straight; and this will be no night, anyhow, for such a march. Why, man, 'twould take an hour and more to cross the lake, and then a long uphill walk before ye could reach Trebeck's place; and if the night should fall while you were still on the mountain, ye might lose your life among the rocks. It can't be 'tis come to that yet; and the call was in the air, I'm told, all yesterday, and distant thunder to-day, travelling this way over Blarwyn Fells; and 'twill be a night no one will be out, much less on the mountain side.'

CHAPTER IX.

THE CRAZY PARSON.

MRS. JULAPER had grown weather-wise, living for so long among this noble and solitary scenery, where people must observe Nature or else nothing—where signs of coming storm or change are almost local, and record themselves on particular headlands and mountain-peaks, or in the mists, or in mirrored tints of the familiar lake, and are easily learned or remembered. At all events, her presage proved true too.

The sun had set an hour and more. It was dark; and an awful thunder-storm, whose march, like the distant reverberations of an invading army, had been faintly heard beyond the barriers of Blarwyn Fells throughout the afternoon, was near them now, and had burst in deep-mouthed battle among the ravines at the other side, and over the broad lake, that glared like a sheet of burnished steel under its flashes of dazzling blue. Wild and fitful blasts sweeping down the hollows and cloughs of the fells of Golden Friars agitated the lake, and bent the trees low, and whirled away their sere leaves in melancholy drift in their tremendous gusts. And from the window, looking on a scene enveloped in more than the darkness of night, you saw in the pulsations of the lightning, 'before the speedy gleams the darkness swallowed,' the tossing trees and the flying foam and eddies on the lake.

In the midst of the hurlyburly, a loud and long knocking came at the hall-door of Mardykes. How long it had lasted before a chance lull made it audible I do not know.

There was nothing picturesquely poor, any more than there were evidences of wealth, anywhere in Sir Bale Mardykes' household. He had no lack of servants, but they were of an inexpensive and homely sort; and the hall-door being opened by the son of an old tenant on the estate—the tempest beating on the other side of the house, and comparative shelter under the gables at the front—he saw standing before him, in the agitated air, a thin old man, who muttering, it might be, a benediction, stepped into the hall, and displayed long silver tresses, just as the storm had blown them, ascetic and eager features, and a pair of large light eyes that wandered wildly. He was dressed thinly, in threadbare black; a pair of long leather gaiters, buckled high above his knee, protected his thin shanks through moss and pool; and the singularity of his appearance was heightened by a wide-leafed felt hat, over which he had tied his handkerchief, so as to bring the leaf of it over his ears, and to secure it from being whirled from his head by the storm.

This odd and storm-beaten figure—tall, and a little stooping, as well as thin—was not unknown to the servant, who saluted him with something of fear as well as of respect as he bid him reverently welcome, and asked him to come in and sit by the fire.

'Get you to your master, and tell him I have a message to him from one he has not seen for two-and-forty years.'

As the old man, with his harsh old voice, thus spoke, he unknotted his handkerchief and beat the dust and rain-drops from his hat upon his knee.

The servant knocked at the library-door, where he found Sir Bale.

'Well, what's the matter?' cried Sir Bale sharply, from his chair before the fire, with angry eyes looking over his shoulder.

'Here's 't sir cumman, Sir Bale,' he answered.

'Sir,' or 'the Sir,' is still used as the clergyman's title in the Northumbrian counties.

'What sir?'

'Sir Hugh Creswell, if you please, Sir Bale.'

'Ho!—mad Creswell?—O, the crazy parson. Well, tell Mrs. Julaper to let him have some supper—and—and to let him have a bed in some suitable place. That's what he wants. These mad fellows know what they are about.'

'No, Sir Bale Mardykes, that is not what he wants,' said the loud wild voice of the daft sir over the servant's shoulder. 'Often has Mardykes Hall given me share of its cheer and its shelter and the warmth of its fire; and I bless the house that has been an inn to the wayfarer of the Lord. But to-night I go up the lake to Pindar's Bield, three miles on; and there I rest and refresh—not here.'

'And why not *here*, Mr. Creswell?' asked the Baronet; for about this crazy old man, who preached in the fields, and appeared and disappeared so suddenly in the orbit of his wide and unknown perambulations of those northern and border counties, there was that sort of superstitious feeling which attaches to the mysterious and the good—an idea that it was lucky to harbour and dangerous to offend him. No one knew whence he came or whither he went. Once in a year, perhaps, he might appear at a lonely farmstead door among the fells, salute the house, enter, and be gone in the morning. His life was austere; his piety enthusiastic, severe, and tinged with the craze which inspired among the rustic population a sort of awe.

'I'll not sleep at Mardykes to-night; neither will I eat, nor drink, nor sit me down—no, nor so much as stretch my hands to the fire. As the man of God came out of Judah to king Jeroboam, so come I to you, sent by a vision, to bear a warning; and as he said, "If thou wilt give me half thy house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place," so also say I.'

'Do as you please,' said Sir Bale, a little sulkily. 'Say your say; and you are welcome to stay or go, if go you will on so mad a night as this.'

'Leave us,' said Creswell, beckoning the servant back with his thin hands; 'what I have to say is to your master.'

The servant went, in obedience to a gesture from Sir Bale, and shut the door.

The old man drew nearer to the Baronet, and lowering his loud stern voice a little, and interrupting his discourse from time to time, to allow the near thunder-peals to subside, he said,

'Answer me, Sir Bale—what is this that has chanced between you and Philip Feltram?'

The Baronet, under the influence of that blunt and peremptory demand, told him shortly and sternly enough.

'And of all these facts you are sure, else ye would not blast your early companion and kinsman with the name of thief?'

'I *am* sure,' said Sir Bale grimly.

'Unlock that cabinet,' said the old man with the long white locks.

'I've no objection,' said Sir Bale; and he did unlock an old oak cabinet that stood, carved in high relief with strange figures and gothic grotesques, against the wall, opposite the fireplace. On opening it there were displayed a system of little drawers and pigeon-holes such as we see in more modern escritoires.

'Open that drawer with the red mark of a seal upon it,' continued Hugh Creswell, pointing to it with his lank finger.

Sir Bale did so; and to his momentary amazement, and even consternation, there lay the missing note, which now, with one of those sudden caprices of memory which depend on the laws of suggestion and association, he remembered having placed there with his own hand.

'That is it,' said old Creswell with a pallid smile, and fixing his wild eyes on the Baronet. The smile subsided into a frown, and said he: 'Last night I slept near Haworth Moss; and your father came to me in a dream, and said: "My son Bale accuses Philip of having stolen a bank-note from his desk. He forgets that he himself placed it in his cabinet. Come with me." I was, in the spirit, in this room; and he led me to this cabinet, which he opened; and in that drawer he showed me that note. "Go," said he, "and tell him to ask Philip Feltram's pardon, else he will but go in weakness to return in power;" and he said that which it is not lawful to repeat. My message is told. Now, a word from myself,' he added sternly. 'The dead, through my lips, has spoken, and under God's thunder and lightning his words have found ye. Why so uppish wi' Philip Feltram? See how ye threaped, and yet were wrong. He's no tazzle—he's no taggelt. *Mind* ye ask his pardon. Ye must change, or he will change. Go in weakness, come in power: mark ye the words. 'Twill make a peal that will be heard in toon and desert, in the swirls o' the mountain, through pikes and valleys, and mak' a waaly man o' thee.'

The old man with these words, uttered in the broad northern dialect of his common speech, strode from the room and shut the door. In another minute he was forth into the storm, pursuing what remained of his long march to Pindar's Bield.

'Upon my soul!' said Sir Bale, recovering from the sort of stun which the sudden and strange visit had left, 'that's a cool old fellow! Come to rate me and teach me my own business in my own house!' and he rapped out a fierce oath. 'Change his mind or no, here he sha'n't stay to-night—not an hour.'

Sir Bale was in the lobby in a moment, and thundered to his servants:

'I say, put that impudent fool out of the door—put him out by the shoulder, and never let him get his foot inside it more!'

But the old man's yea was yea, and his nay nay. He had quite meant what he said; and, as I related, was beyond the reach of the indignity of extrusion.

Sir Bale on his return shut his door as violently as if it were in the face of the old prophet.

'Ask Feltram's pardon indeed! For what? Why, any jury on earth would have hanged him on half the evidence; and I, like a fool, was going to let him off with his liberty and my hundred pounds! Ask his pardon indeed!'

Still there were misgivings in his mind; a consciousness that he did owe explanation and apology to Feltram, and an insurmountable reluctance to undertake either. The old dislike—a contempt mingled with fear—not any fear of his malevolence, a fear only of his carelessness and folly; for, as I have said, Feltram knew many things, it was believed, of the Baronet's continental and Asiatic life, and had even gently remonstrated with him upon the dangers into which he was running. A simple fellow like Philip Feltram is a dangerous depositary of a secret. This Baronet was proud, too; and the mere possession of his secrets by Feltram was an involuntary insult, which Sir Bale could not forgive. He wished him far away; and except for the recovery of his bank-note, which he could ill spare, he was sorry that this suspicion was cleared up.

The thunder and storm were unabated; it seemed indeed that they were growing wilder and more awful.

He opened the window-shutter and looked out upon that sublimest of scenes; and so intense and magnificent were its phenomena, that Sir Bale was for a while absorbed in this contemplation.

When he turned about, the sight of his 100*l.* note, still between his finger and thumb, made him smile grimly.

The more he thought of it, the clearer it was that he could not leave matters as they were. Well, what should he do? He would send for Mrs. Julaper, and tell her vaguely that he had changed his mind about Feltram, and that he might continue to stay at Mardykes Hall as usual. That would suffice. She could speak to Feltram.

He sent for her; and soon, in the lulls of the great uproar without, he could hear the jingle of Mrs. Julaper's keys and her light tread upon the lobby.

'Mrs. Julaper,' said the Baronet in his dry careless way, 'Feltram may remain; your eloquence has prevailed. What have you been crying about?' he asked, observing that his housekeeper's usually cheerful face was, in her own phrase, 'all cried.'

'It is too late, sir; he's gone.'

'And when did he go?' asked Sir Bale, a little put out. 'He chose an odd evening, didn't he? So like him!'

'He went about half an hour ago; and I'm very sorry, sir; it's a sore sight to see the poor lad going from the place he was reared in, and a hard thing, sir; and on such a night, above all.'

'No one asked him to go to-night. Where is he gone to?'

'I don't know, I'm sure; he left my room, sir, when I was upstairs; and Janet saw him pass the window not ten minutes after Mr. Creswell left the house.'

'Well, then, there's no good, Mrs. Julaper, in thinking more about it; he has settled the matter his own way; and as he so ordains it—amen, say I. Good-night.'

Chapter X.

ADVENTURE IN TOM MARLIN'S BOAT.

Philip Feltram was liked very well—a gentle, kindly, and very timid creature, and, before he became so heart-broken, a fellow who liked a joke or a pleasant story, and could laugh heartily. Where will Sir Bale find so unresisting and respectful a butt and retainer? and whom will he bully now?

Something like remorse was troubling Sir Bale's heart a little; and the more he thought on the strange visit of Hugh Creswell that night, with its unexplained menace, the more uneasy he became.

The storm continued; and even to him there seemed something exaggerated and inhuman in the severity of his expulsion on such a night. It was his own doing, it was true; but would people believe that? and would he have thought of leaving Mardykes at all if it had not been for his kinsman's cruelty? Nay, was it not certain that if Sir Bale had done as Hugh Creswell had urged him, and sent for Feltram forthwith, and told him how all had been cleared up, and been a little friendly with him, he would have found him still in the house?—for he had not yet gone for ten minutes after Creswell's departure, and thus all that was to follow might have been averted. But it was now too late, and Sir Bale would let the affair take its own course.

Below him, outside the window at which he stood ruminating, he heard voices mingling with the storm. He could with tolerable certainty perceive, looking into the obscurity, that there were three men passing close under it, carrying some very heavy burden among them.

He did not know what these three black figures in the obscurity were about. He saw them pass round the corner of the building toward the front, and in the lulls of the storm could hear their gruff voices talking.

We have all experienced what a presentiment is, and we all know with what an intuition the faculty of observation is sometimes heightened. It was such an apprehension as sometimes gives its peculiar horror to a dream—a sort of knowledge that what those people were about was in a dreadful way connected with his own fate.

He watched for a time, thinking that they might return; but they did not. He was very uncomfortable, and in a state of suspense.

'If they want me, they won't have much trouble in finding me, nor any scruple in plaguing me; they never have.'

Sir Bale returned to his letters, a score of which he was that night getting off his conscience—an arrear which would not have troubled him had he not ceased, for two or three days, altogether to employ Philip Feltram, who had been accustomed to take all that sort of drudgery off his hands.

All the time he was writing now he had a feeling that the shadows he had seen pass under his window were machinating some trouble for him, and an uncomfortable suspense made him lift his eyes now and then to the door, fancying sounds and footsteps; and after a resultless wait he would say to himself, 'If any one is coming, why the devil don't they come?' and apply himself again to his letters.

But on a sudden he heard good Mrs. Julaper's step trotting along the lobby, and the tiny ringing of her keys.

Here was news coming; and the Baronet stood up looking at the door, on which presently came a hurried rapping; and before he had answered, in the midst of an awful thunder-clap that suddenly broke, rattling over the house, the good woman opened the door in great agitation, and cried with a tremulous uplifting of her hands,

'O, Sir Bale! O, la, sir! here's poor dear Philip Feltram come home drowned!'

Sir Bale stared at her sternly for some seconds.

'Come, now, do be distinct,' said Sir Bale; 'what has happened?'

'He's lying on the sofer in the old still-room. You never saw—my God!—O, sir—what is life?'

'D—n it, can't you cry by and by, and tell me what's the matter *now*?'

'A bit o' fire there, as luck would have it; but what is hot or cold now? La, sir, they're all doin' what they can, and Tom Warren is on the gallop down to Golden Friars for Doctor Torvey.'

'*Is* he drowned, or is it only a ducking? Come, bring me to the place. Dead men don't usually want a fire, or consult doctors. I'll see for myself.'

So Sir Bale Mardykes, pale and grim, accompanied by the light-footed Mrs. Julaper, strode along the passages, and was led by her into the old still-room, which had ceased to be used for its original purpose. All the servants in the house were now collected there, and three men also who lived by the margin of the lake; one of them thoroughly drenched, with rivulets of water still trickling from his sleeves, water down the wrinkles and pockets of his waistcoat and from the feet of his trousers, and pumping and oozing from his shoes, and streaming from his hair down the channels of his cheeks like a continuous rain of tears.

The people drew back a little as Sir Bale entered with a quick step and a sharp pallid frown on his face. There was a silence as he stooped over Philip Feltram, who lay on a low bed next the wall, dimly lighted by two or three candles here and there about the room.

He laid his hand, for a moment, on his cold wet breast.

Sir Bale knew what should be done in order to give a man in such a case his last chance for life. Everybody was speedily put in motion. Philip's drenched clothes were removed, hot blankets enveloped him, warming-pans and hot bricks lent their aid; he was placed at the prescribed angle, so that water flowed freely from his mouth. The old expedient for inducing artificial breathing was employed, and a lusty pair of kitchen bellows did duty for his lungs.

But these helps to life, and suggestions to nature, availed not. Forlorn and peaceful lay the features of poor Philip Feltram; cold and dull to the touch; no breath through the blue lips; no sight in the fish-like eyes; pulseless and cold in the midst of all the hot bricks and warming-pans about him.

At length, everything having been tried, Sir Bale, who had been directing, placed his hand within the clothes, and laid it silently on Philip's shoulder and over his heart; and after a little wait, he shook his head, and looking down on his sunken face, he said,

'I'm afraid he's gone. Yes, he's gone, poor fellow! And bear you this in mind, all of you; Mrs. Julaper there can tell you more about it. She knows that it was certainly in no compliance with my wish that he left the house to-night: it was his own obstinate perversity, and perhaps—I forgive him for it—a wish in his unreasonable resentment to throw some odium upon this house, as having refused him shelter on such a night, than which imputation nothing can be more utterly false. Mrs. Julaper there knows how welcome he was to stay the night; but he would not; he had made up his mind, it seems, without telling any person. Had he told you, Mrs. Julaper?'

'No, sir,' sobbed Mrs. Julaper from the centre of a pocket-handkerchief in which her face was buried.

'Not a human being: an angry whim of his own. Poor Feltram! and here's the result,' said the Baronet. 'We have done our best—done everything. I don't think the doctor, when he comes, will say that anything has been omitted; but all won't do. Does any one here know how it happened?'

Two men knew very well—the man who had been ducked, and his companion, a younger man, who was also in the still-room, and had lent a hand in carrying Feltram up to the house.

Tom Marlin had a queer old stone tenement by the edge of the lake just under Mardykes Hall. Some people said it was the stump of an old tower that had once belonged to Mardykes Castle, of which in the modern building scarcely a relic was discoverable.

This Tom Marlin had an ancient right of fishing in the lake, where he caught pike enough for all Golden Friars; and keeping a couple of boats, he made money beside by ferrying passengers over now and then. This fellow, with a furrowed face and shaggy eyebrows, bald at top, but with long grizzled locks falling upon his shoulders, said,

‘He wer wi’ me this mornin’, sayin’ he’d want t’ boat to cross the lake in, but he didn’t say what hour; and when it came on to thunder and blow like this, ye may guess I did not look to see him to-night. Well, my wife was just lightin’ a pig-tail—tho’ light enough and to spare there was in the lift already—when who should come clatterin’ at the latch-pin in the blow o’ wind and thunder but Philip, poor lad, himself; and an ill hour for him it was. He’s been some time in ill fettle, though he was never frowsy, not he, but always kind and dooce, and canty once, like anither; and he asked me to take the boat across the lake at once to the Clough o’ Cloostedd at t’other side. The woman took the pet and wodn’t hear o’t; and, “Dall me, if I go to-night,” quoth I. But he would not be put off so, not he; and ding-drive he went to it, cryin’ and putrein’, ye’d a-said, poor fellow, he was wrang i’ his garrets a’most. So at long last I bethought me, there’s nout o’ a sea to the north o’ Snakes Island, so I’ll pull him by that side—for the storm is blowin’ right up by Golden Friars, ye mind—and when we get near the point, thinks I, he’ll see wi’ his een how the lake is, and gie it up. For I liked him, poor lad; and seein’ he’d set his heart on’t, I wouldn’t vex him, nor frump him wi’ a no. So down we three—myself, and Bill there, and Philip Feltram—come to the boat; and we pulled out, keeping Snakes Island atwixt us and the wind. ’Twas smooth water wi’us, for ’twas a scug there, but white enough was all beyont the point; and passing the finger-stone, not forty fathom from the shore o’ the island, Bill and me pullin’ and he sittin’ in the stern, poor lad, up he rises, a bit rabblin’ to himself, wi’ his hands lifted so.’

“Look a-head!” says I, thinkin’ something was comin’ atort us.

‘But ’twasn’t that. The boat was quiet, for while we looked oo’er our shouthers oo’er her bows, we didn’t pull, so she lay still; and lookin’ back again on Philip, he was rabblin’ on all the same.

“It’s nobbut a prass wi’ himsel’, poor lad,” thinks I.

‘But that wasn’t it neither; for I sid something white come out o’ t’water, by the gunwale, like a hand. By Jen! and he leans oo’er and tuk it; and he sagged like, and so it drew him in, under the mere, before I cud du nout. There was nout to thraa tu him, and no time; down he went, and I followed; and thrice I dived before I found him, and brought him up by the hair at last; and there he is, poor lad! and all one if he lay at the bottom o’ t’ mere.’

As Tom Marlin ended his narrative—often interrupted by the noise of the tempest without, and the peals of thunder that echoed awfully above, like the chorus of a melancholy ballad—the sudden clang of the hall-door bell, and a more faintly-heard knocking, announced a new arrival.

Chapter XI.

SIR BALE'S DREAM.

It was Doctor Torvey who entered the old still-room now, buttoned-up to the chin in his greatcoat, and with a muffler of many colours wrapped partly over that feature.

'Well!—hey? So poor Feltram's had an accident?'

The Doctor was addressing Sir Bale, and getting to the bedside as he pulled off his gloves.

'I see you've been keeping him warm—that's right; and a considerable flow of water from the mouth; turn him a little that way. Hey? O, ho!' said the Doctor, as he placed his hand upon Philip, and gently stirred his limbs. 'It's more than an hour since this happened. I'm afraid there's very little to be done now;' and in a lower tone, with his hand on poor Philip Feltram's arm, and so down to his fingers, he said in Sir Bale Mardyke's ear, with a shake of his head,

'Here, you see, poor fellow, here's the cadaveric stiffness; it's very melancholy, but it's all over, he's gone; there's no good trying any more.—Come here, Mrs. Julaper. Did you ever see any one dead? Look at his eyes, look at his mouth. You ought to have known that, with half an eye.—And you know,' he added again confidentially in Sir Bale's ear, 'trying anything more *now* is all my eye.'

Then after a few more words with the Baronet, and having heard his narrative, he said from time to time, 'Quite right; nothing could be better; capital practice, sir,' and so forth. And at the close of all this, amid the sobs of kind Mrs. Julaper and the general whimpering of the humbler handmaids, the Doctor standing by the bed, with his knuckles on the coverlet, and a glance now and then on the dead face beside him, said—by way of 'quieting men's minds,' as the old tract-writers used to say—a few words to the following effect:

'Everything has been done here that the most experienced physician could have wished. Everything has been done in the best way. I don't know anything that has not been done, in fact. If I had been here myself, I don't know—hot bricks—salt isn't a bad thing. I don't know, I say, that anything of any consequence has been omitted.' And looking at the body, 'You see,' and he drew the fingers a little this way and that, letting them return, as they stiffly did, to their former attitude, 'you may be sure that the poor gentleman was quite dead by the time he arrived here. So, since he was laid there, nothing has been lost by delay.—And, Sir Bale, if you have any directions to send to Golden Friars, sir, I shall be most happy to undertake your message.

'Nothing, thanks; it is a melancholy ending, poor fellow! You must come to the study with me, Doctor Torvey, and talk a little bit more; and—very sad, doctor—and you must have a glass of sherry, or some port—the port used not to be bad here; I don't take it—but very melancholy it is—bring port and sherry; and, Mrs. Julaper, you'll be good enough to see that everything that should be done here is looked to; and let Marlin and the men have supper and something to drink. You have been too long in your wet clothes, Marlin.'

So, with gracious words all round, he led the Doctor to the library where he had been sitting, and was affable and hospitable, and told him his own version of all that had passed between him and Philip Feltram, and presented himself in an amiable point of view, and pleased the Doctor with his port and flatteries—for he could not afford to lose any one's good word just now; and the Doctor was a bit of a gossip, and in most houses in that region, in one character or another, every three months in the year.

So in due time the Doctor drove back to Golden Friars, with a high opinion of Sir Bale, and higher still of his port, and highest of all of himself: in the best possible humour with the world, not minding the storm that blew in his face, and which he defied in good-humoured mock-heroics spoken in somewhat thick accents, and regarding the thunder and lightning as a lively gala of fireworks; and if there had been a chance of finding his cronies still in the George and Dragon, he would have been among them forthwith, to relate the tragedy of the night, and tell what a good fellow, after all, Sir Bale was; and what a fool, at best, poor Philip Feltram.

But the George was quiet for that night. The thunder rolled over voiceless chambers; and the lights had been put out within the windows, on whose multitudinous small panes the lightning glared. So the Doctor went home to Mrs. Torvey, whom he charmed into good-humoured curiosity by the tale of wonder he had to relate.

Sir Bale's qualms were symptomatic of something a little less sublime and more selfish than conscience. He was not sorry that Philip Feltram was out of the way. His lips might begin to babble inconveniently at any time, and why should not his mouth be stopped? and what stopper so effectual as that plug of clay which fate had introduced? But he did not want to be charged with the odium of the catastrophe. Every man cares something for the opinion of his fellows. And seeing that Feltram had been well liked, and that his death had excited a vehement commiseration, Sir Bale did not wish it to be said that he had made the house too hot to hold him, and had so driven him to extremity.

Sir Bale's first agitation had subsided. It was now late, he had written many letters, and he was tired. It was not wonderful, then, that having turned his lounging-chair to the fire, he should have fallen asleep in it, as at last he did.

The storm was passing gradually away by this time. The thunder was now echoing among the distant glens and gorges of Daulness Fells, and the angry roar and gusts of the tempest were subsiding into the melancholy soughing and piping that soothe like a lullaby.

Sir Bale therefore had his unpremeditated sleep very comfortably, except that his head was hanging a little uneasily; which, perhaps, helped him to this dream.

It was one of those dreams in which the continuity of the waking state that immediately preceded it seems unbroken; for he thought that he was sitting in the chair which he occupied, and in the room where he actually was. It seemed to him that he got up, took a candle in his hand, and went through the passages to the old still-room where Philip Feltram lay. The house seemed perfectly still. He could hear the chirp of the crickets faintly from the distant kitchen, and the tick of the clock sounded loud and hollow along the passage. In the old still-room, as he opened the door, was no light, except what was admitted from the candle he carried. He found the body of poor Philip Feltram just as he had left it—his gentle face, saddened by the touch of death, was turned upwards, with white lips; with traces of suffering fixed in its outlines, such as caused Sir Bale, standing by the bed, to draw the coverlet over the dead man's features, which seemed silently to upbraid him. 'Gone in weakness!' said Sir Bale, repeating the words of the 'daft sir,' Hugh Creswell; and as he did so, a voice whispered near him, with a great sigh, 'Come in power!' He looked round, in his dream, but there was no one; the light seemed to fail, and a horror slowly overcame him, especially as he thought he saw the figure under the coverlet stealthily beginning to move. Backing towards the door, for he could not take his eyes off it, he saw something like a huge black ape creep out at the foot of the bed; and springing at him, it griped him by the throat, so that he could not breathe; and a thousand voices were instantly round him, holloaing, cursing, laughing in his ears; and in this direful plight he waked.

Was it the ring of those voices still in his ears, or a real shriek, and another, and a long peal, shriek after shriek, swelling madly through the distant passages, that held him still, freezing in the horror of his dream?

I will tell you what this noise was.

Chapter XII.

MARCELLA BLIGH AND JUDITH WALE KEEP WATCH.

After his bottle of port with Sir Bale, the Doctor had gone down again to the room where poor Philip Feltram lay.

Mrs. Julaper had dried her eyes, and was busy by this time;

and two old women were making all their arrangements for a night-watch by the body, which they had washed, and, as their phrase goes, 'laid out' in the humble bed where it had lain while there was still a hope that a spark sufficient to rekindle the fire of life might remain. These old women had points of resemblance: they were lean, sallow, and wonderfully wrinkled, and looked each malign and ugly enough for a witch.

Marcella Bligh's thin hooked nose was now like the beak of a bird of prey over the face of the drowned man, upon whose eyelids she was placing penny-pieces, to keep them from opening; and her one eye was fixed on her work, its sightless companion showing white in its socket, with an ugly leer.

Judith Wale was lifting the pail of hot-water with which they had just washed the body. She had long lean arms, a hunched back, a great sharp chin sunk on her hollow breast, and small eyes restless as a ferret's; and she clattered about in great bowls of shoes, old and clouted, that were made for a foot as big as two of hers.

The Doctor knew these two old women, who were often employed in such dismal offices.

'How does Mrs. Bligh? See me with half an eye? Hey—that's rhyme, isn't it?—And, Judy lass—why, I thought you lived nearer the town—here making poor Mr. Feltram's last toilet. You have helped to dress many a poor fellow for his last journey. Not a bad notion of drill either—they stand at attention stiff and straight enough in the sentry-box. Your recruits do you credit, Mrs. Wale.'

The Doctor stood at the foot of the bed to inspect, breathing forth a vapour of very fine old port, his hands in his pockets, speaking with a lazy thickness, and looking so comfortable and facetious, that Mrs. Julaper would have liked to turn him out of the room.

But the Doctor was not unkind, only extremely comfortable. He was a good-natured fellow, and had thought and care for the living, but not a great deal of sentiment for the dead, whom he had looked in the face too often to be much disturbed by the spectacle.

'You'll have to keep that bandage on. You should be sharp; you should know all about it, girl, by this time, and not let those muscles stiffen. I need not tell you the mouth shuts as easily as this snuff-box, if you only take it in time.—I suppose, Mrs. Julaper, you'll send to Jos Fringer for the poor fellow's outfit. Fringer is a very proper man—there ain't a properer und-aker in England. I always re-mmend Fringer—in Church-street in Golden Friars. You know Fringer, I daresay.'

'I can't say, sir, I'm sure. That will be as Sir Bale may please to direct,' answered Mrs. Julaper.

'You've got him very straight, straighter than I thought you could; but the large joints were not so stiff. A very little longer wait, and you'd hardly have got him into his coffin. He'll want a vr-r-ry long one, poor lad. Short cake is life, ma'am. Sad thing this. They'll open their eyes, I promise you, down in the town. 'Twill be cool enough, I'd shay, affre all th-thunr-thunnle, you know. I think I'll take a nip, Mrs. Jool-fr, if you wouldn't mine makin' me out a thimmle-ful bran-band-bran-rand-andy, eh, Mishs Joolfr?'

And the Doctor took a chair by the fire; and Mrs. Julaper, with a dubious conscience and dry hospitality, procured the brandy-flask and wine-glass, and helped the physician in a thin hesitating stream, which left him ample opportunity to cry 'Hold—enough!' had he been so minded. But that able physician had no confidence, it would seem, in any dose under a bumper, which he sipped with commendation, and then fell asleep with the firelight on his face—to tender-hearted Mrs. Julaper's disgust—and snored with a sensual disregard of the solemnity of his situation; until with a profound nod, or rather dive, toward the fire, he awoke, got up and shook his ears with a kind of start, and standing with his back to the fire, asked for his muffler and horse; and so took his leave of the weird sisters, who were still pottering about the body, with croak and whisper, and nod and ogle. He took his leave also of good Mrs. Julaper, who was completing arrangements with teapot and kettle, spiced elderberry wine, and other comforts, to support them through their proposed vigil. And finally, in a sort of way, he took his leave of the body, with a long business-like stare, from the foot of the bed, with his short hands stuffed into his pockets. And so, to Mrs. Julaper's relief, this unseemly doctor, speaking thickly, departed.

And now, the Doctor being gone, and all things prepared for the 'wake' to be observed by withered Mrs. Bligh of the one eye, and yellow Mrs. Wale of the crooked back, the house grew gradually still. The thunder had by this time died into the solemn boom of distant battle, and the fury of the gale had subsided to the long sobbing wail that is charged with so eerie a melancholy. Within all was stirless, and the two old women, each a 'Mrs.' by courtesy, who had not much to thank Nature or the world for, sad and cynical, and in a sort outcasts told off by fortune to these sad and grizzly services, sat themselves down by the fire, each perhaps feeling unusually at home in the other's society; and in this soured and forlorn comfort, trimming their fire, quickening the song of the kettle to a boil, and waxing polite and chatty; each treating the other with that deprecatory and formal courtesy which invites a return in kind, and both growing strangely happy in this little world of their own, in the unusual and momentary sense of an importance and consideration which were delightful.

The old still-room of Mardykes Hall is an oblong room wainscoted. From the door you look its full length to the wide stone-shafted Tudor window at the other end. At your left is the ponderous mantelpiece, supported by two spiral stone pillars; and close to the door at the right was the bed in which the two crones had just stretched poor Philip Feltram, who lay as still as an uncoloured wax-work, with a heavy penny-piece on each eye, and a bandage under his jaw, making his mouth look stern. And the two old ladies over their tea by the fire conversed agreeably, compared their rheumatisms and other ailments wordily, and talked of old times, and early recollections, and of sick-beds they had attended, and corpses that 'you would not know, so pined and windered' were they; and others so fresh and canny, you'd say the dead had never looked so bonny in life.

Then they began to talk of people who grew tall in their coffins, of others who had been buried alive, and of others who walked after death. Stories as true as holy writ.

'Were you ever down by Hawarth, Mrs. Bligh—hard by Dalworth Moss?' asked crook-backed Mrs. Wale, holding her spoon suspended over her cup.

'Neea whaar sooa far south, Mrs. Wale, ma'am; but ma father was ofttimes down thar cuttin' peat.'

'Ah, then ye'll not a kenned farmer Dykes that lived by the Lin-tree Scaur. 'Tweer I that laid him out, poor aad fellow, and a dow man he was when aught went cross wi' him; and he cursed and sweared, twad gar ye dodder to hear him. They said he was a hard man wi' some folk; but he kep a good house, and liked to see plenty, and many a time when I was swaimous about my food, he'd clap t' meat on ma plate, and mak' me eat ma fill. Na, na—there was good as well as bad in farmer Dykes. It was a year after he deed, and Tom Ettles was walkin' down by the Birken Stoop one night, and not a soul nigh, when he sees a big ball, as high as his knee, whirlin' and spangin' away before him on the road. What it wer he could not think; but he never consayted there was a freet or a bo thereaway; so he kep near it, watchin' every spang and turn it took, till it ran into the gripe by the roadside. There was a gravel-pit just there, and Tom Ettles wished to take another gliff at it before he went on. But when he keeked into the pit, what should he see but a man attoppa a horse that could not get up or on; and says he, "I think ye be at a dead-lift there, gaffer." And wi' the word, up looks the man, and who sud it be but farmer Dykes himsel; and Tom Ettles saw him plain eneugh, and kenned the horse too for Black Jack, the farmer's aad beast, that broke his leg and was shot two years and more befor the farmer died. "Ay," says farmer Dykes, lookin' very bad; "forsett-and-backsett, ye'll tak' me oot, Tom Ettles, and clap ye doun behint me quick, or I'll claw ho'd o' thee." Tom felt his hair risin' stiff on his heed, and his tongue so fast to the roof o' his mouth he could scarce get oot a word; but says he, "If Black Jack can't do it o' noo, he'll ne'er do't and carry double." "I ken my ain business best," says Dykes. "If ye gar me gie ye a look, 'twill gie ye the creepin's while ye live; so git ye doun, Tom;" and with that the dobby lifts its neaf; and Tom saw there was a red light round horse and man, like the glow of a peat fire. And says Tom, "In the name o' God, ye'll let me pass;" and with the word the gooast draws itsel' doun, all a-creaked, like a man wi' a sudden pain; and Tom Ettles took to his heels more deed than alive.'

They had approached their heads, and the story had sunk to that mysterious murmur that thrills the listener, when in the brief silence that followed they heard a low odd laugh near the door.

In that direction each lady looked aghast, and saw Feltram sitting straight up in the bed, with the white bandage in his hand, and as it seemed, for one foot was below the coverlet, near the floor, about to glide forth.

Mrs. Bligh, uttering a hideous shriek, clutched Mrs. Wale, and Mrs. Wale, with a scream as dreadful, gripped Mrs. Bligh; and quite forgetting their somewhat formal politeness, they reeled and tugged, wrestling towards the window, each struggling to place her companion between her and the 'dobby,' and both uniting in a direful peal of yells.

This was the uproar which had startled Sir Bale from his dream, and was now startling the servants from theirs.

J. A. Pasquier, del.

Edmund Evans, sc.

THE FIGURE ON THE MOUNTAIN SIDE.

THE HAUNTED BARONET

BY J. S. LE FANU,

AUTHOR OF 'UNCLE SILAS,' ETC.

Chapter XIII. The Mist on the Mountain.

Doctor Torvey was sent for early next morning, and came full of wonder, learning, and scepticism. Seeing is believing, however; and there was Philip Feltram living, and soon to be, in all bodily functions, just as usual.

'Upon my soul, Sir Bale, I couldn't have believed it, if I had not seen it with my eyes,' said the Doctor impressively, while sipping a glass of sherry in the 'breakfast-parlour,' as the great panelled and pictured room next the dining-room was called. 'I don't think there is any similar case on record—no pulse, no more than the poker; no respiration, by Jove, no more than the chimney-piece; as cold as a lead image in the garden there. Well, you'll say all that might possibly be fallacious; but what will you say to the cadaveric stiffness? Old Judy Wale can tell you; and my friend Marcella—Monocula would be nearer the mark—Mrs. Bligh, she knows all those common, and I may say up to this, infallible, signs of death, as well as I do. There is no mystery about them; they'll depose to the literality of the symptoms. You heard how they gave tongue. Upon my honour, I'll send the whole case up to my old chief, Sir Hervey Hansard, to London. You'll hear what a noise it will make among the profession. There never was—and it ain't too much to say there never *will* be—another case like it.'

During this lecture, and a great deal more, Sir Bale leaned back in his chair, with his legs extended, his heels on the ground, and his arms folded, looking sourly up in the fa a tall lady in white satin, in a ruff, and with a bird on her hand, who smiled down superciliously from her frame upon the Baronet. Sir Bale seemed a little bit high and dry with the Doctor.

'You physicians are unquestionably,' he said, 'a very learned profession.'

The Doctor bowed.

'But there's just one thing you know nothing about—'

'Eh? What's that?' inquired Doctor Torvey.

'Medicine,' answered Sir Bale. 'I was aware you never knew what was the matter with a sick man; but I didn't know, till now, that you couldn't tell when he was dead.'

'Ha, ha!—well—ha, ha!—*yes*—well, you see, you—ha, ha!—you certainly have me there. But it's a case without a parallel—it is, upon my honour. You'll find it will not only be talked about, but written about; and, whatever papers appear upon it, will come to me; and I'll take care, Sir Bale, you shall have an opportunity of reading them.'

'Of which I sha'n't avail myself,' answered Sir Bale. 'Take another glass of sherry, Doctor.'

The Doctor made his acknowledgments and filled his glass, and looked through the wine between him and the window.

'Ha, ha!—see there, your port, Sir Bale, gives a fellow such habits—looking for the beeswing, by Jove. It isn't easy, in one sense at least, to get your port out of a fellow's head when once he has tasted it.'

But if the honest Doctor meant a hint for a glass of that admirable bin, it fell pointless; and Sir Bale had no notion of making another libation of that precious liquor in honour of Doctor Torvey.

'And I take it for granted,' said Sir Bale, 'that Feltram will do very well; and, should anything go wrong, I can send for you—unless he should die again; and in that case I think I shall take my own opinion.'

So he and the Doctor parted.

Sir Bale, although he did not consult the Doctor on his own case, was not particularly well. 'That lonely place, those frightful mountains, and that damp black lake'—which features in the landscape he cursed all round—'are enough to give any man blue devils; and when a fellow's spirits go, he's all gone. That's why I'm dyspeptic—that and those d—d debts—and the post, with its flight of croaking and screaming letters from London. I wish there was no post here. I wish it was like Sir Amerald's time, when they shot the York mercer that came to dun him, and no one ever took him to task about it; and now they can pelt you at any distance they please through the post; and fellows lose their spirits and their appetite and any sort of miserable comfort that is possible in this odious abyss.'

Was there gout in Sir Bale's case, or 'vapours'? I know not what the faculty would have called it; but Sir Bale's mode of treatment was simply to work off the attack by long and laborious walking.

This evening his walk was upon the Fells of Golden Friars—long after the landscape below was in the eclipse of twilight, the broad bare sides and angles of these gigantic uplands still lighted by the misty western sun.

There is no such sense of solitude as that which we experience upon the silent and vast elevations of great mountains. Lifted high above the level of human sounds and habitations, among the wild expanses and colossal features of Nature, we are thrilled in our loneliness with a strange fear and elation—an ascent above the reach of life's vexations or companionship, and the tremblings of a wild and undefined misgiving. The filmy disc of the moon had risen in the east, and was already faintly silvering the shadowy scenery below, while yet Sir Bale stood in the mellow light of the western sun, which still touched also the summits of the opposite peaks of Morvyn Fells.

Sir Bale Mardykes did not, as a stranger might, in prudence, hasten his descent from the heights at which he stood while yet a gleam of daylight remained to him. For he was, from his boyhood, familiar with those solitary regions; and, beside this, the thin circle of the moon, hung in the eastern sky, would brighten as the sunlight sank, and hang like a lamp above his steps.

There was in the bronzed and resolute face of the Baronet, lighted now in the parting beams of sunset, a resemblance to that of Charles the Second—not our 'merry' ideal, but the more energetic and saturnine face which the portraits have preserved to us.

He stood with folded arms on the side of the slope, admiring, in spite of his prejudice, the unusual effects of a view so strangely lighted—the sunset tints on the opposite peaks, lost in the misty twilight, now deepening lower down into a darker shade, through which the outlines of the stone gables and tower of Golden Friars and the light of fire or candle in their windows were dimly visible.

As he stood and looked, his more distant sunset went down, and sudden twilight was upon him, and he began to remember the beautiful Homeric picture of a landscape coming out, rock and headland, in the moonlight.

There had hung upon the higher summits, at his right, a heavy fold of white cloud, which on a sudden broke, and, like the smoke of artillery, came rolling down the slopes towards him. Its principal volume, however, unfolded itself in a mighty flood down the side of the mountain towards the lake; and that which spread towards and soon enveloped the ground on which he stood was by no means so dense a fog. A thick mist enough it was; but still, to a distance of twenty or thirty yards, he could discern the outline of a rock or scaur, but not beyond it.

There are few sensations more intimidating than that of being thus enveloped on a lonely mountain-side, which, like this one, here and there breaks into precipice.

There is another sensation, too, which affects the imagination. Overtaken thus on the solitary expanse, there comes a new chill and tremour as this treacherous medium surrounds us, through which unperceived those shapes which fancy conjures up might approach so near and bar our path.

From the risk of being reduced to an actual standstill he knew he was exempt. The point from which the wind blew, light as it was, assured him of that. Still the mist was thick enough seriously to embarrass him. It had overtaken him as he was looking down upon the lake; and he now looked to his left, to try whether in that direction it was too thick to permit a view of the nearest landmarks. Through this white film he saw a figure standing only about five-and-twenty steps away, looking down, as it seemed, in precisely the same direction as he, quite motionless, and standing like a shadow projected upon the smoky vapour. It was the figure of a slight tall man, with his arm extended, as if pointing to a remote object, which no mortal eye certainly could discern through the mist. Sir Bale gazed at this figure, doubtful whether he were in a waking dream, unable to conjecture whence it had come; and as he looked, it moved, and was almost instantly out of sight.

He descended the mountain cautiously. The mist was now thinner, and through the haze he was beginning to see objects more distinctly, and, without danger, to proceed at a quicker pace. He had still a long walk by the uplands towards Mardykes Hall, before he descended to the level of the lake.

The mist was still quite thick enough to circumscribe his view and to hide the general features of the landscape; and well was it, perhaps, for Sir Bale that his boyhood had familiarised him with the landmarks on the mountain-side.

He had made nearly four miles on his solitary homeward way, when, passing under a ledge of rock which bears the name of the Cat's Skaitch, he saw the same figure in the short cloak standing within some thirty or forty yards of him—the thin curtain of mist, through which the moonlight touched it, giving to it an airy and unsubstantial character.

Sir Bale came to a standstill. The man in the short cloak nodded and drew back, and was concealed by the angle of the rock.

Sir Bale was now irritated, as men are after a start, and shouting to the stranger to halt, he 'slapped' after him, as the northern phrase goes, at his best pace. But again he was gone, and nowhere could he see him, the mist favouring his evasion.

Looking down the fells that overhang Mardykes Hall, the mountain-side dips gradually into a glen, which, as it descends, becomes precipitous and wooded. A footpath through this ravine conducts the wayfarer to the level ground that borders the lake; and by this dark pass Sir Bale Mardykes strode, in comparatively clear air, along the rocky path dappled with moonlight.

As he emerged upon the lower ground he again encountered the same figure. It approached. It was Philip Feltram.

CHAPTER XIV.

A NEW PHILIP FELTRAM.

THE Baronet had not seen Feltram since his strange escape from death. His last interview with him had been stern and threatening; Sir Bale dealing with appearances in the spirit of an incensed judge, Philip Feltram lamenting in the submission of a helpless despair.

Feltram was full in the moonlight now, standing erect, and smiling cynically on the Baronet.

There was that in the bearing and countenance of Feltram that disconcerted him more than the surprise of the sudden meeting.

He had determined to meet Feltram in a friendly way, whenever that not very comfortable interview became inevitable. But he was confused by the suddenness of Feltram's appearance; and the tone, cold and stern, in which he had last spoken to him came first, and he spoke in it after a brief silence.

'I fancied, Mr. Feltram, you were in your bed; I little expected to find you here. I think the Doctor gave very particular directions, and said that you were to remain perfectly quiet.'

'But I know more than the Doctor,' replied Feltram, still smiling unpleasantly.

'I think, sir, you would have been better in your bed,' said Sir Bale loftily.

'Come, come, come, come!' exclaimed Philip Feltram contemptuously.

'It seems to me, sir,' said Sir Bale, a good deal astonished, 'you rather forget yourself.'

'Easier to forget oneself than to forgive others, at times, Sir Bale,' replied Philip Feltram in his unparalleled mood.

'That's the way fools knock themselves up,' continued Sir Bale. 'You've been walking ever so far—away to the Fells of Golden Friars. It was you whom I saw there. What d—d folly! What brought you there?'

'To observe you,' he replied.

'And have you walked the whole way there and back again? How did you get there?'

'Pooh! how did I come—how did you come—how did the fog come? From the lake, I suppose. We all come up, and then down.' So spoke Philip Feltram, with serene insolence.

'You are pleased to talk nonsense,' said Sir Bale.

'Because I like it—with a *meaning*.'

Sir Bale looked at him, not knowing whether to believe his eyes and ears. He did not know what to make of him.

'I had intended speaking to you in a conciliatory way; you seem to wish to make that impossible'—Philip Feltram's face wore its repulsive smile;—'and in fact I don't know what to make of you, unless you are ill; and ill you well may be. You can't have walked much less than twelve miles.'

'Wonderful effort for me!' said Feltram with the same sneer.

'Rather surprising for a man so nearly drowned,' answered Sir Bale Mardykes.

'A dip: you don't like the lake, sir; but I do. And so it is: as Antæus touched the earth, so I the water, and rise refreshed.'

'I think you'd better get in and refresh there. I meant to tell you that all the unpleasantness about that bank-note is over.'

'Is it?'

'Yes. It has been recovered by Mr. Creswell, who came here last night. I've got it, and you're not to blame,' said Sir Bale.

'But some one *is* to blame,' observed Mr. Feltram, smiling still.

'Well, *you* are not, and that ends it,' said the Baronet peremptorily.

'Ends it? Really, how good! how very good!'

Sir Bale looked at him, for there was something ambiguous and even derisive in the tone of Feltram's voice.

But before he could quite make up his mind, Feltram spoke again.

'Everything is settled about you and me?'

'There is nothing to prevent your staying at Mardykes now,' said Sir Bale graciously.

'I shall be with you for two years, and then I go on my travels,' answered Feltram, with a saturnine and somewhat wild look around him.

'Is he going mad?' thought the Baronet.

'But before I go, I'm to put you in a way of paying off your mortgages. That is my business here.'

Sir Bale looked at him sharply. But now there was not the unpleasant smile, but the darkened look of a man in secret pain.

'You shall know it by and by.'

And without more ceremony, and with a darkening face, Philip Feltram made his way under the boughs of the thick oaks that grew there, leaving on Sir Bale's mind an impression that he had been watching some one at a distance, and had gone in consequence of a signal.

In a few seconds he followed in the same direction, halloaing after Feltram; for he did not like the idea of his wandering about the country by moonlight, or possibly losing his life among the precipices, and bringing a new discredit upon his house. But no answer came; nor could he in that thick copse gain sight of him again.

When Sir Bale reached Mardykes Hall he summoned Mrs. Julaper, and had a long talk with her. But she could not say that there appeared anything amiss with Philip Feltram; only he seemed more reserved, and as if he was brooding over something he did not intend to tell.

'But, you know, Sir Bale, what happened might well make a thoughtful man of him. If he's ever to think of Death, it should be after looking him so hard in the face; and I'm not ashamed to say, I'm glad to see he has grace to take the lesson, and I hope his experiences may be sanctified to him, poor fellow! Amen.'

'Very good song, and very well sung,' said Sir Bale; 'but it doesn't seem to me that he has been improved, Mrs. Julaper. He seems, on the contrary, in a queer temper and anything but a heavenly frame of mind; and I thought I'd ask you, because if he is ill—I mean feverish—it might account for his eccentricities, as well as make it necessary to send after him, and bring him home, and put him to bed. But I suppose it is as you say,—his adventure has upset him a little, and he'll sober in a day or two, and return to his old ways.'

But this did not happen. A change, more comprehensive than at first appeared, had taken place, and a singular alteration was gradually established.

He grew thin, his eyes hollow, his face gradually forbidding.

His ways and temper were changed: he was a new man with Sir Bale; and the Baronet after a time, people said, began to grow afraid of him. And certainly Feltram had acquired an extraordinary influence over the Baronet, who a little while ago had regarded and treated him with so much contempt.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PURSE OF GOLD.

THE Baronet was very slightly known in his county. He had led a reserved and inhospitable life. He was pressed upon by heavy debts; and being a proud man, held aloof from society and its doings. He wished people to understand that he was nursing his estate; but somehow the estate did not thrive at nurse. In the country other people's business is admirably well known; and the lord of Mardykes was conscious, perhaps, that his neighbours knew as well as he did that the utmost he could do was to pay the interest charged upon it, and to live in a frugal way enough.

The lake measures some four or five miles across, from the little jetty under the walls of Mardykes Hall to Cloostedd.

Philip Feltram, changed and morose, loved a solitary row upon the lake; and sometimes, with no one to aid him in its management, would take the little sail-boat and pass the whole day upon those lonely waters.

Frequently he crossed to Cloostedd; and mooring the boat under the solemn trees that stand reflected in that dark mirror, he would disembark and wander among the lonely woodlands, as people thought, cherishing in those ancestral scenes the memory of ineffaceable injuries, and the wrath and revenge that seemed of late to darken his countenance, and to hold him always in a moody silence.

One autumnal evening Sir Bale Mardykes was sourly ruminating after his solitary meal. A very red sun was pouring its last beams through the valley at the western extremity of the lake, across its elsewhere sombre waters, and touching with a sudden and blood-red tint the sail of the skiff in which Feltram was returning from his lonely cruise.

'Here comes my domestic water-fiend,' sneered Sir Bale, as he lay back in his cumbrous arm-chair. 'Cheerful place, pleasant people, delicious fate! The place alone has been enough to set that fool out of his little senses, d—n him!'

Sir Bale averted his eyes, and another subject not pleasanter entered his mind. He was thinking of the races that were coming off next week at Heckleston Downs, and what sums of money might be made there, and how hard it was that he should be excluded by fortune from that brilliant lottery.

'Ah, Mrs. Julaper, is that you?'

Mrs. Julaper, who was still at the door, curtsied, and said, 'I came, Sir Bale, to see whether you'd please to like a jug of mulled claret, sir.'

'Not I, my dear. I'll take a mug of beer and my pipe; that homely solace better befits a ruined gentleman.'

'H'm, sir; you're not that, Sir Bale; you're no worse than half the lords and great men that are going. I would not hear another say that of you, sir.'

'That's very kind of you, Mrs. Julaper; but you won't call *me* out for backbiting myself, especially as it is true, d—d true, Mrs. Julaper! Look ye; there never was a Mardykes here before but he could lay his hundred or his thousand pounds on the winner of the Heckleston Cup; and what could I bet? Little more than that mug of beer I spoke of. It was my great-grandfather who opened the course on the Downs of Heckleston, and now *I* can't show there! Well, what must I do? Grin and bear it, that's all. If you please, Mrs. Julaper, I will have that jug of claret you offered. I want spice and hot wine to keep me alive; but I'll smoke my pipe first, and in an hour's time it will do.'

When Mrs. Julaper was gone, he lighted his pipe, and drew near the window, through which he looked upon the now fading sky and the twilight landscape.

He smoked his pipe out, and by that time it had grown nearly dark. He was still looking out upon the faint outlines of the view, and thinking angrily what a little bit of luck at the races would do the solemn trees that stand reflected in that dark mirror, he would disembark and wander among the lonely woodlands, as people thought, cherishing in those ancestral scenes the memory of ineffaceable injuries, and the wrath and revenge that seemed of late to darken his countenance, and to hold him always in a moody silence.

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He smoked his pipe out, and by that time it had grown nearly dark. He was still looking out upon the faint outlines of the view, and thinking angrily what a little bit of luck at the races would do great improvement making *her* fee you,' observed Sir Bale, with an approach to his old manner.

'He put that in my hand, with a message,' said Feltram.

'He? O, then it was a male fortune-teller!'

'Gipsies go in gangs, men and women. *He* might lend, though *she* told fortunes,' said Feltram.

'It's the first time I ever heard of gipsies lending money;' and he eyed the purse with a whimsical smile.

With his lean fingers still holding it, Feltram sat down at the table. His face darkened as if in cunning thought, and his chin sank upon his breast as he leaned back.

'I think,' continued Sir Bale, 'ever since they were spoiled, the Egyptians have been a little shy of lending, and leave that branch of business to the Hebrews.'

'What would you give to know, now, the winner at Heckleston races?' said Feltram suddenly, raising his eyes.

'Yes; that would be worth something,' answered Sir Bale, looking at him with more interest than the incredulity he affected would quite warrant.

'And this money I have power to lend you, to make your game.'

'Do you mean that really?' said Sir Bale, with a new energy in tone, manner, and features.

'That's heavy; there are some guineas there,' said Feltram with a dark smile, raising the purse in his hand a little, and letting it drop upon the table with a clang.

'There is *something* there, at all events,' said Sir Bale.

Feltram took the purse by the bottom, and poured out on the table a handsome pile of guineas.

'And do you mean to say, you got all that from a gipsy in Cloostedd Wood?'

'A friend, who is—*myself*,' answered Philip Feltram.

'Yourself! Then it is yours—*you* lend it?' said the Baronet, amazed; for there was no getting over the heap of guineas, and the wonder was pretty equal whence they had come.

'Myself, and not myself,' said Feltram oracularly; 'as like as voice and echo, man and shadow.'

Had Feltram in some of his solitary wanderings and potterings lighted upon hidden treasure? There was a story of two Feltrams of Cloostedd, brothers, who had joined the king's army and fought at Marston Moor, having buried in Cloostedd Wood a great deal of gold and plate and jewels. They had, it was said, intrusted one tried servant with the secret; and that servant remained at home. But by a perverse fatality the three witnesses had perished within a month: the two brothers at Marston Moor; and the confidant, of fever, at Cloostedd. From that day forth treasure-seekers had from time to time explored the woods of Cloostedd; and many a tree of mark was dug beside, and the earth beneath many a stone and scar and other landmark in that solitary forest was opened by night, until hope gradually died out, and the tradition had long ceased to prompt to action, and had become a story and nothing more.

The image of the nursery-tale had now recurred to Sir Bale after so long a reach of years; and the only imaginable way, in his mind, of accounting for penniless Philip Feltram having all that gold in his possession was that, in some of his lonely wanderings, chance had led him to the undiscovered hoard of the two Feltrams who had died in the great civil wars.

'Perhaps those gipsies you speak of found the money where you found them; and in that case, as Cloostedd Forest, and all that is in it, is my property, their sending it to me is more like my servant's handing me my hat and stick when I'm going out, than making me a present.'

'You will not be wise to rely upon the law, Sir Bale, and to refuse the help that comes unasked. But if you like your mortgages as they are, keep them; and if you like my terms as they are, take them; and when you have made up your mind, let me know.'

Philip Feltram dropped the heavy purse into his capacious coat-pocket, and walked, muttering, out of the room.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MESSAGE FROM CLOOSTEDD.

'COME back, Feltram; come back, Philip!' cried Sir Bale hastily. 'Let us talk, can't we? Come and talk this odd business over a little; you must have mistaken what I meant; I should like to hear all about it.'

'All is not much, sir,' said Philip Feltram, reëntering the room, whose door he had half closed after him. 'In the forest of Cloostedd I met to-day some people, one of whom can foretell events, and told me the names of the winners of the first three races at Heckleston, and gave me this purse, with leave to lend you so much money as you care to stake upon the races. I take no security; you sha'n't be troubled; and you'll never see the lender, unless you seek him out.'

'Well, those are not bad terms,' said Sir Bale, smiling wistfully at the purse, which Feltram had again placed upon the table.

'No, not bad,' repeated Feltram, in the harsh low tone in which he now habitually spoke.

'You'll tell me what the prophet said about the winners; I should like to hear the names.'

'The names I shall tell you, if you walk out with me,' said Feltram.

'Why not here?' asked Sir Bale.

'My memory does not serve me here so well. Some people, in some places, though they be silent, obstruct thought. Come, let us speak,' said Philip Feltram, leading the way.

Sir Bale, with a shrug, followed him.

By this time it was dark. Feltram was walking slowly towards the margin of the lake; and Sir Bale, more curious as the delay increased, followed him, and smiled faintly as he looked after his tall gaunt figure, as if, even in the dark, expressing a ridicule which he did not honestly feel, and the expression of which, even if there had been light, there was no one near enough to see.

When he reached the edge of the lake, Feltram stooped, and Sir Bale thought that his attitude was that of one who whispers to and caresses a reclining person. What he fancied was a dark figure lying horizontally in the shallow water, near the edge, turned out to be, as he drew near, no more than a shadow on the elsewhere lighter water; and with his change of position it had shifted and was gone, and Philip Feltram was but dabbling his hand this way and that in the water, and muttering faintly to himself. He rose as the Baronet drew near, and standing upright, said,

'I like to listen to the ripple of the water among the grass and pebbles; the tongue and lips of the lake are lapping and whispering all along. It is the merest poetry; but you are so romantic, you excuse me.'

There was an angry curve in Feltram's eyebrows, and a cynical smile, and something in the tone which to the satirical Baronet was almost insulting. But even had he been less curious, I don't think he would have betrayed his mortification; for an odd and unavowed influence which he hated was gradually establishing in Feltram an ascendency which sometimes vexed and sometimes cowed him.

'You are not to tell,' said Feltram, drawing near him in the dusk. 'The secret is yours when you promise.'

'Of course I promise,' said Sir Bale. 'If I believed it, you don't think I could be such an ass as to tell it; and if I didn't believe it, I'd hardly take the trouble.'

Feltram stooped, and dipping the hollow of his hand in the water, he raised it full, and said he, 'Hold out your hand—the hollow of your hand—like this. I divide the water for a sign—share to me and share to you.' And he turned his hand, so as to pour half the water into the hollow palm of Sir Bale, who was smiling, with some uneasiness mixed in his mockery.

'Now, you promise to keep all secrets respecting the teller and the finder, be that who it may?'

'Yes, I promise,' said Sir Bale.

'Now do as I do,' said Feltram. And he shed the water on the ground, and with his wet fingers touched his forehead and his breast; and then he joined his hand with Sir Bale's, and said, 'Now you are my safe man.'

Sir Bale laughed. ‘That’s the game they call “grand mufti,”’ said he.

‘Exactly; and means nothing,’ said Feltram, ‘except that some day it will serve you to remember by. And now the names. Don’t speak; listen—you may break the thought else. The winner of the first is *Beeswing;* of the second, *Falcon;* and of the third, *Lightning.*’

He had stood for some seconds in silence before he spoke; his eyes were closed; he seemed to bring up thought and speech with difficulty, and spoke faintly and drowsily, both his hands a little raised, and the fingers extended, with the groping air of a man who moves in the dark. In this odd way, slowly, faintly, with many a sigh and scarcely audible groan, he gradually delivered his message and was silent. He stood, it seemed, scarcely half awake, muttering indistinctly and sighing to himself. You would have said that he was exhausted and suffering, like a man at his last hour resigning himself to death.

At length he opened his eyes, looked round a little wildly and languidly, and with another great sigh sat down on a large rock that lies by the margin of the lake, and sighed heavily again and again. You might have fancied that he was a second time recovering from drowning.

Then he got up, and looked drowsily round again, and sighed like a man worn out with fatigue, and was silent.

Sir Bale did not care to speak until he seemed a little more likely to obtain an answer. When that time came, he said, ‘I wish, for the sake of my believing, that your list was a little less incredible. Not one of the horses you name is the least likely; not one of them has a chance.’

‘So much the better for you; you’ll get what odds you please. You had better seize your luck; on Tuesday Beeswing runs,’ said Feltram. ‘When you want money for the purpose, I’m your banker—here is your bank.’

He touched his breast, where he had placed the purse, and then he turned and walked swiftly away.

Sir Bale looked after him till he disappeared in the dark. He fluctuated among many surmises about Feltram. Was he insane, or was he practising an imposture? or was he fool enough to believe the predictions of some real gipsies? and had he borrowed this money, which in Sir Bale’s eyes seemed the greatest miracle in the matter, from those thriving shepherd mountaineers, the old Trebecks, who, he believed, were attached to him? Feltram had, he thought, borrowed it as if for himself; and having, as Sir Bale in his egotism supposed, ‘a sneaking regard’ for him, had meant the loan for his patron, and conceived the idea of his using his revelations for the purpose of making his fortune. So, seeing no risk, and the temptation being strong, Sir Bale resolved to avail himself of the purse, and use his own judgment as to what horse to back.

About eleven o'clock Feltram, unannounced, walked, with his hat still on, into Sir Bale's library, and sat down at the opposite side of his table, looking darkly into the Baronet's face for a time.

'Shall you want the purse?' he asked at last.

'Certainly; I always want a purse,' said Sir Bale energetically.

'The condition is, that you shall back each of the three horses I have named. But you may back them for much or little, as you like, only the sum must not be less than five pounds in each hundred which this purse contains. That is the condition, and if you violate it, you will make some powerful people very angry, and you will feel it. Do you agree?'

'Of course; five pounds in the hundred—certainly; and how many hundreds are there?'

'Three.'

'Well, a fellow with luck may win something with three hundred pounds, but it ain't very much.'

'Quite enough, if you use it aright.'

'Three hundred pounds,' repeated the Baronet, as he emptied the purse, which Feltram had just placed in his hand, upon the table; and contemplating them with grave interest, he began telling them off in little heaps of five-and-twenty each. He might have thanked Feltram, but he was thinking more of the guineas than of the grizzly donor.

'Ay,' said he, after a second counting, 'I think there *are* exactly three hundred. Well, so you say I must apply three times five—fifteen of these. It is an awful pity backing those queer horses you have named; but if I must make the sacrifice, I must, I suppose?' he added, with a hesitating inquiry in the tone.

'If you don't, you'll rue it,' said Feltram coldly, and so left the room.

'Penny in pocket's a merry companion,' says the old English proverb, and Sir Bale felt in better spirits and temper than he had for many a day as he replaced the guineas in the purse.

It was long since he had visited either the race-course or any other place of amusement. Now he might face his kind without fear that his pride should be mortified, and dabble in the fascinating agitations of the turf once more.

'Who knows how this little venture may turn out?' he thought. 'It's time the luck should turn. My last summer in Germany, my last winter in Paris—d—n me, I'm owed something. It's time I should win a bit.'

Sir Bale had suffered the indolence of a solitary and discontented life imperceptibly to steal upon him. It would not do to appear for the first time on Heckleston Lea with any of those signs of negligence which, in his case, might easily be taken for poverty. All his appointments, therefore, were carefully looked after; and on the Monday following, he, followed by his groom, rode away for the Saracen's Head at Heckleston, where he was to put up, for the races that were to begin on the day following, and presented as handsome an appearance as a peer in those days need have cared to show.

Chapter XVII.

ON THE COURSE—BEESWING, FALCON, AND LIGHTNING.

As he rode towards Golden Friars, through which his route lay, in the early morning light, in which the mists of night were clearing, he looked back towards Mardykes with a hope of speedy deliverance from that hated imprisonment, and of a return to the continental life in which he took delight. He saw the summits and angles of the old building touched with the cheerful beams, and the grand old trees, and at the opposite side the fells dark, with their backs towards the east; and down the side of the wooded and precipitous clough of Feltram, the light, with a pleasant contrast against the beetling purple of the fells, was breaking in the faint distance. On the lake he saw the white speck that indicated the sail of Philip Feltram's boat, now midway between Mardykes and the wooded shores of Cloostedd.

'Going on the same errand,' thought Sir Bale, 'I should not wonder. I wish him the same luck. Yes, he's going to Cloostedd Forest. I hope he may meet his gipsies there—the Trebecks, or whoever they are.'

And as a momentary sense of degradation in being thus beholden to such people smote him, 'Well,' thought he, 'who knows? Many a fellow will make a handsome sum of a poorer purse than this at Heckleston. It will be a light matter paying them then.'

Through Golden Friars he rode. Some of the spectators who did not like him, wondered audibly at the gallant show, hoped it was paid for, and conjectured that he had ridden out in search of a wife. On the whole, however, the appearance of their Baronet in a smarter style than usual was popular, and accepted as a change to the advantage of the town.

Next morning he was on the race-course of Heckleston, renewing old acquaintance and making himself as agreeable as he could—an object, among some people, of curiosity and even interest. Leaving the carriage-sides, the hoods and bonnets, Sir Bale was soon among the betting men, deep in more serious business.

How did he make his book? He did not break his word. He backed Beeswing, Falcon, and Lightning. But it must be owned not for a shilling more than the five guineas each, to which he stood pledged. The odds were forty-five to one against Beeswing, sixty to one against Lightning, and fifty to one against Falcon.

'A pretty lot to choose!' exclaimed Sir Bale, with vexation. 'As if I had money so often, that I should throw it away!'

The Baronet was testy in thinking over all this, and looked on Feltram's message as an impertinence and the money as his own.

Let us now see how Sir Bale Mardyke's pocket fared.

Sulkily enough at the close of the week he turned his back on Heckleston race-course, and took the road to Golden Friars.

He was in a rage with his luck, and by no means satisfied with himself; and yet he had won something. The result of the racing had been curious. In the three principal races the favourites had been beaten: one by an accident, another on a technical point, and the third by fair running. And what horses had won? The names were precisely those which the 'fortune-teller' had predicted.

Well, then, how was Sir Bale in pocket as he rode up to his ancestral house of Mardykes, where a few thousand pounds would have been very welcome? He had won exactly 775 guineas; and had he staked a hundred instead of five on each of the names communicated by Feltram, he would have won 15,500 guineas.

He dismounted before his hall-door, therefore, with the discontent of a man who had lost nearly 15,000 pounds. Feltram was upon the steps, and laughed dryly.

'What do you laugh at?' asked Sir Bale tartly.

'You've won, haven't you?'

'Yes, I've won; I've won a trifle.'

'On the horses I named?'

'Well, yes; it so turned out, by the merest accident.'

Feltram laughed again dryly, and turned away.

Sir Bale entered Mardykes Hall, and was surly. He was in a much worse mood than before he had ridden to Heckleston. But after a week or so ruminating upon the occurrence, he wondered that Feltram spoke no more of it. It was undoubtedly wonderful. There had been no hint of repayment yet, and he had made some hundreds by the loan; and, contrary to all likelihood, the three horses named by the unknown soothsayer had won. Who was this gipsy? It would be worth bringing the soothsayer to Mardykes, and giving his people a camp on the warren, and all the poultry they could catch, and a pig or a sheep every now and then. Why, that seer was worth the philosopher's stone, and could make Sir Bale's fortune in a season. Some one else would be sure to pick him up if *he* did not.

So, tired of waiting for Feltram to begin, he opened the subject one day himself. He had not seen him for two or three days; and in the wood of Mardykes he saw his lank figure standing among the thick trees, upon a little knoll, leaning on a staff which he sometimes carried with him in his excursions up the mountains.

'Feltram!' shouted Sir Bale.

Feltram turned and beckoned. Sir Bale Mardykes muttered, but obeyed the signal.

'I brought you here, because you can from this point with unusual clearness to-day see the opening of the Clough of Feltram at the other side, and the clump of trees, where you will find the way to reach the person about whom you are always thinking.'

'Who said I am always thinking about him?' said the Baronet angrily; for he felt like a man detected in a weakness, and resented it.

'*I* say it, because I *know* it; and *you* know it also. See that clump of trees standing solitary in the hollow? Among them, to the left, grows an ancient oak. Cut in its bark are two enormous letters—F; so large and bold, that the rugged furrows of the oak bark fail to obscure them, although they are ancient and spread by time. Standing against the trunk of this great tree, with your back to these letters, you are looking up the Glen or Clough of Feltram, that opens northward, where stands Cloostedd Forest spreading far and thick. Now, how do you find our fortune-teller?'

'That is exactly what I wish to know,' answered Sir Bale; 'because, although I can't, of course, believe that he's a witch, yet he has either made the most marvellous fluke I've heard of, or else he has got extraordinary sources of information; or perhaps he acts partly on chance, partly on facts. Be it which you please, I say he's a marvellous fellow; and I should like to see him, and have a talk with him; and perhaps he could arrange with me. I should be very glad to make an arrangement with him to give me the benefit of his advice about any matter of the same kind again.'

'I think he's willing to see you; but he's a fellow with a queer fancy and a pig-head. He'll not come here; you must go to him; and approach him his own way too, or you may fail to find him. On these terms he invites you.'

Sir Bale laughed.

'He knows his value, and means to make his own terms.'

'Well, there's nothing unfair in that; and I don't see that I should dispute it. How is one to find him?'

'Stand, as I told you, with your back to those letters cut in the oak. Right before you lies an old Druidic altar-stone. Cast your eye over its surface, and on some part of it you are sure to see a black stain about the size of a man's hand. Standing, as I suppose you, against the oak, that stain, which changes its place from day to day, will give you the line you must follow through the forest in order to light upon him. Take carefully from it such trees or objects as will guide you; and when the forest thickens, do the best you can to keep to the same line. You are sure to find him.'

'You'll come, Feltram. I should lose myself in that wilderness, and probably fail to discover him,' said Sir Bale; 'and I really wish to see him.'

'When two people wish to meet, it is hard if they don't. I can go with you a bit of the way; I can walk a little through the forest by your side, until I see the small flower that grows peeping here and there, that always springs where those people walk; and when I begin to see that sign, I must leave you. And, first, I'll take you across the lake.'

'By Jove, you'll do no such thing!' said Sir Bale hastily.

'But that is the way he chooses to be approached,' said Philip Feltram.

'I have a sort of feeling about that lake; it's the one childish spot that is left in my imagination. The nursery is to blame for it—old stories and warnings; and I can't think of that. I should feel that I had invoked an evil omen if I did. I know it is all nonsense; but we are queer creatures, Feltram. I must only ride there.'

'Why, it is five-and-twenty miles round the lake to that; and after all were done, he would not see you. He knows what he's worth, and he'll have his own way,' answered Feltram. 'The sun will soon set. See that withered spray, near Snakes Island, that looks like fingers rising from the water? When its points grow tipped with red, the sun has but three minutes more to live.'

'That is a wonder which I can't see; it is too far away.'

'Yes; the lake has many signs; but it needs sight to see them,' said Feltram.

'So it does,' said the Baronet; 'more than most men have got. I'll ride round, I say; and I make my visit, for this time, my own way.'

'You'll not find him, then; and he wants his money. It would be a pity to vex him.'

'It was to you he lent the money,' said Sir Bale.

'Yes.'

'Well, you are the proper person to find him out and pay him,' urged Sir Bale.

'Perhaps so; but he invites you; and if you don't go, he may be offended, and you may hear no more from him.'

'We'll try. When can you go? There are races to come off next week, for once and away, at Langton. I should not mind trying my luck there. What do you say?'

'I know nothing about it. What can I say?'

'You can go there and pay him, and ask the same question—what horses, I mean, are to win. All the county are to be there; and plenty of money will change hands.'

'I'll try,' said Feltram.

'When will you go?'

'To-morrow,' he answered.

'I have an odd idea, Feltram, that you are really going to pay off those cursed mortgages.'

He laid his hand with at least a gesture of kindness on the thin arm of Feltram, who coldly answered,

'So have I;' and walked down the side of the little knoll and away, without another word or look.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON THE LAKE, AT LAST.

NEXT day Philip Feltram crossed the lake; and Sir Bale, seeing the boat on the water, guessed its destination, and watched its progress with no little interest, until he saw it moored and its sail drop at the rude pier that affords a landing at the Clough of Feltram. He was now satisfied that Philip had actually gone to seek out the 'cunning man,' and gather hints for the next race.

When that evening Feltram returned, and, later still, entered Sir Bale's library, the master of Mardykes was gladder to see him and more interested about his news than he would have cared to confess.

Philip Feltram did not affect unconsciousness of that anxiety, but, with great directness, proceeded to satisfy it.

'I was in Cloostedd Forest to-day, nearly all day—and found the old gentleman in a wax. He did not ask me to drink, nor show me any kindness. He was huffed because you would not take the trouble to cross the lake to speak to him yourself. He took the money you sent him, and counted it over, and dropped it into his pocket; and he called you hard names enough and to spare; but I brought him round, and at last he did talk.'

'And what did he say?'

'He said that the estate of Mardykes would belong to a Feltram.'

'He might have said something more likely,' said Sir Bale sourly. 'Did he say anything more?'

'Yes. He said the winner at Langton Lea would be Silver Bell.'

'Any other name?'

'No.'

'Silver Bell? Well, that's not so odd as the last. Silver Bell stands high in the list. He has a good many backers—long odds in his favour against most of the field. I should not mind backing Silver Bell.'

The fact is, that he had no idea of backing any other horse from the moment he heard the soothsayer's prediction. He made up his mind to no half measures this time. He would go in to win something handsome.

He was in great force and full of confidence on the race-course. He had no fears for the result. He bet heavily. There was a good margin still untouched of the Mardykes estate; and Sir Bale was a good old name in the county. He found a ready market for his offers, and had soon staked—such is the growing frenzy of that excitement—about twenty thousand pounds on his favourite, and stood to win seven.

He did not win, however. He lost his twenty thousand pounds.

And now the Mardykes estate was in imminent danger. Sir Bale returned, having distributed I O Us and promissory notes in all directions about him—quite at his wit's end.

Feltram was standing—as on the occasion of his former happier return—on the steps of Mardykes Hall, in the evening sun, throwing eastward a long shadow that was lost in the lake. He received him, as before, with a laugh.

Sir Bale was too much broken to resent this laugh as furiously as he might, had he been a degree less desperate.

He looked at Feltram savagely, and dismounted.

'Last time you would not trust him, and this time he would not trust you. He's huffed, and played you false.'

'It was not he. I should have backed that d—d horse in any case,' said Sir Bale, grinding his teeth. 'What a witch you have discovered! One thing is true, perhaps. If there was a Feltram rich enough, he might have the estate now; but there ain't. They are all beggars. So much for your conjurer.'

'He may make amends to you, if you make amends to him.'

'He! Why, what can that wretched impostor do? D—n me, I'm past helping now.'

'Don't you talk so,' said Feltram. 'Be civil. You must please the old gentleman. He'll make it up. He's placable when it suits him. Why not go to him his own way? I hear you are nearly ruined. You must go and make it up.'

'Make it up! With whom? With a fellow who can't make even a guess at what's coming? Why should I trouble my head about him more?'

'No man, young or old, likes to be frumped. Why did you cross his fancy? He won't see you unless you go to him as he chooses.'

'If he waits for that, he may wait till doomsday. I don't choose to go on that water—and cross it I won't,' said Sir Bale.

But when his distracting reminders began to pour in upon him, and the idea of dismembering what remained of his property came home to him, his resolution faltered.

'I say, Feltram, what difference can it possibly make to him if I choose to ride round to Cloostedd Forest instead of crossing the lake in a boat?'

Feltram smiled darkly, and answered,

'I can't tell. Can you?'

'Of course I can't—I say I can't; besides, what audacity of a fellow like that presuming to prescribe to me! Utterly ludicrous! And he can't predict—do you really think or believe, Feltram, that he can?'

'I know he can. I know he misled you on purpose. He likes to punish those who don't respect his will; and there is a reason in it, often quite clear—not ill-natured. Now you see he compels you to seek him out, and when you do, I think he'll help you through your trouble. He said he would.'

'Then you have seen him since?'

'Yesterday. He has put a pressure on you; but he means to help you.'

'If he means to help me, let him remember I want a banker more than a seer. Let him give me a lift, as he did before. He must lend me money.'

'He'll not stick at that. When he takes up a man, he carries him through.'

'The races of Byermere—I might retrieve at them. But they don't come off for a month nearly; and what is a man like me to do in the mean time?'

'Every man should know his own business best. I'm not like you,' said Feltram grimly.

Now Sir Bale's trouble increased, for some people were pressing. Something like panic supervened; for it happened that land was bringing just then a bad price, and more must be sold in consequence.

'All I can tell them is, I am selling land. It can't be done in an hour. I'm selling enough to pay them all twice over. Gentlemen used to be able to wait till a man sold his acres for payment. D—n them! do they want my body, that they can't let me alone for five minutes?'

The end of it was, that before a week Sir Bale told Feltram that he would go by boat, since that fellow insisted on it; and he did not very much care if he were drowned.

It was a beautiful autumnal day. Everything was bright in that mellowed sun, and the deep blue of the lake was tremulous with golden ripples; and crag and peak and scattered wood, faint in the distance, came out with a filmy distinctness on the fells in that pleasant light.

Sir Bale had been ill, and sent down the night before for Doctor Torvey. He was away with a patient. Now, in the morning, he had arrived inopportunely. He met Sir Bale as he issued from the house, and had a word with him in the court, for he would not turn back.

'Well,' said the Doctor, after his brief inspection, 'you ought to be in your bed; that's all I can say. You are perfectly mad to think of knocking about like this. Your pulse is at a hundred and ten; and, if you go across the lake and walk about Cloostedd, you'll be raving before you come back.'

Sir Bale told him, apologetically, as if his life were more to his doctor than to himself, that he would take care not to fatigue himself, and that the air would do him good, and that in any case he could not avoid going; and so they parted.

Sir Bale took his seat beside Feltram in the boat, the sail was spread, and, bending to the light breeze that blew from Golden Friars, she glided from the jetty under Mardykes Hall, and the eventful voyage had begun.

J. A. Pasquier, del. Edmund Evans, sc.

THE MYSTERY OF SIR BALE'S ROOM.

THE HAUNTED BARONET

BY J. S. LE FANU,

AUTHOR OF 'UNCLE SILAS,' ETC.

CHAPTER XIX. MYSTAGOGUS.

THE sail was loosed, the boat touched the stone step, and Feltram sprang out and made her fast to the old iron ring. The Baronet followed. So! he had ventured upon that water without being drowned. He looked round him as if in a dream. He had not been there since his boyhood. There were no regrets, no sentiment, no remorse; only an odd return of the associations and fresh feelings of boyhood, and a long reach of time suddenly annihilated.

The little hollow in which he stood; the three hawthorn trees at his right; every crease and undulation of the sward, every angle and crack in the lichen-covered rock at his feet, recurred with a sharp and instantaneous recognition to his memory.

'Many a time your brother and I fished for hours together from that bank there, just where the bramble grows. That bramble has not grown an inch ever since, not a leaf altered; we used to pick blackberries off it, with our rods stuck in the bank—it was later in the year than now—till we stript it quite bare after a day or two. The steward used to come over—they were marking timber for cutting—and we used to stay here while they rambled through the wood there, with an axe marking the trees that were to come down. I wonder whether the big old boat is still anywhere. I suppose she was broken up, or left to rot; I have not seen her since we came home. It was in the wood that lies at the right—the other wood is called the forest; they say in old times it was eight miles long, northward up the shore of the lake, and full of deer; with a forester, and a reeve, and a verderer, and all that. Your brother was older than you; he went to India, or the Colonies; is he living still?'

'I care not.'

'That's good-natured, at all events; but do you know?'

'Not I; and what matter? If he's living, I warrant he has his share of the curse, the sweat of his brow and his bitter crust; and if he is dead, he's dust or worse, he's rotten, and smells accordingly.'

Sir Bale looked at him; for this was the brother over whom, only a year or two ago, Philip used to cry tears of pathetic longing. Feltram looked darkly in his face, and sneered with a cold laugh.

'I suppose you mean to jest?' said Sir Bale.

'Not I; it is the truth. It is what you'd say, if you were honest. If he's alive, let him keep where he is; and if he's dead, I'll have none of him, body or soul. Do you hear that sound?'

'Like the wind moaning in the forest?' said Sir Bale.

'Yes.'

'But I feel no wind. There's hardly a leaf stirring.'

'I think so,' said Feltram. 'Come along.'

And he began striding up the gentle slope of the glen, with many a rock peeping through its sward, and tufted ferns and furze, giving a wild and neglected character to the scene; the background of which, where the glen loses itself in a distant turn, is formed by its craggy and wooded side.

Up they marched, side by side, in silence, towards that irregular clump of trees, to which Feltram had pointed from the Mardykes side.

As they approached, it showed more scattered, and two or three of the trees were of grander dimensions than in the distance they had appeared; and as they walked, the broad valley of Cloostedd Forest opened grandly on their left, studding the sides of the valley with solitary trees or groups, which thickened as it descended to the broad level, in parts nearly three miles wide, on which stands the noble forest of Cloostedd, now majestically reposing in the stirless air, gilded and flushed with the melancholy tints of autumn.

I am now going to relate wonderful things; but they rest on the report, strangely consistent, it is true, of Sir Bale Mardykes. That all his senses, however, were sick and feverish, and his brain by no means to be relied on at that moment, is a fact of which sceptics have a right to make all they please and can.

Startled at their approach, a bird like a huge mackaw started from the boughs of the trees, and sped away toward the shelter of the forest, fluttering and hopping close by the side of the little brook which, emerging from the forest, winds into the glen, and beside the course of which Sir Bale and Philip Feltram had ascended from the margin of the lake.

It fluttered on, as if one of its wings were hurt, and kept hopping and bobbing and flying along the ground at its swiftest, screaming all the time discordantly.

'That must be old Mrs. Amerald's bird, that got away a week ago,' said Sir Bale, stopping and looking after it. 'Was not it a mackaw?'

'No,' said Feltram; 'that was a gray parrot; but there are strange birds in Cloostedd Forest, for my ancestors collected all that would live in our climate, and were at pains to find them the food and shelter they were accustomed to, until they grew hardy—that is how it happens.'

'By Jove, that's a secret worth knowing,' said Sir Bale. 'That would make quite a feature. What a fat brute that bird was! and green and dusky-crimson and yellow; but its head is white—age, I suspect; and what a broken beak—hideous bird! splendid plumage; something between a mackaw and a vulture.'

Sir Bale spoke jocularly, but with the interest of a bird-fancier; a taste which, when young, he had indulged; and for the moment forgot his cares and the object of his unwonted excursion.

A moment after, a lank slim bird, perfectly white, started from the same boughs, and winged its way to the forest.

'A kite, I think; but its body is a little too long, isn't it?' said Sir Bale again, stopping and looking after its flight also.

'A foreign kite, I daresay,' said Feltram.

All this time there was hopping near them a jay, with the tameness of a bird accustomed to these solitudes. It peered over its slender wing curiously at the visitors, pecking here and nodding there; and thus hopping, it made a circle round them more than once. Then it fluttered up, and perched on a bough of the old oak, from the deep labyrinth of whose branches the other birds had emerged; and from thence it flew down and lighted on the old druidic stone, that stood like a cyclopean table on its sunken stone props, before the snakelike roots of the oak.

Across this it hopped conceitedly, as over a stage on which it figured becomingly; and after a momentary hesitation, with a little spring, it rose and winged its way in the same direction which the other birds had taken, and was quickly lost in the thick of the forest to the left.

'Here,' said Feltram, 'this is the tree.'

'I remember it well! A gigantic trunk; and, yes, those marks; but I never before read them as letters. Yes, H. F., so they are—very odd I should not have remarked them. They are so large, and so strangely drawn-out in some places, and filled-in in others, and distorted, and the moss has grown about them; I don't wonder I took them for natural cracks and chasms in the bark,' said Sir Bale.

'Very like,' said Feltram.

Sir Bale had remarked, ever since they had begun their walk from the shore, that Feltram seemed to undergo a gloomy change. Sharper, grimmer, wilder grew his features, and shadow after shadow darkened his face.

The solitude and grandeur of the forest, and the repulsive gloom of his companion's countenance and demeanour, communicated a tone of anxiety to Sir Bale; and they stood still, side by side, in total silence for a time, looking toward the forest glades; between themselves and which, on the level sward of the valley, stood many a noble tree and fantastic group of forked birch and thorn, in the irregular formations into which Nature had thrown them.

'Now you stand between the letters. Cast your eyes on the stone,' said Feltram suddenly, and his low stern tones almost startled the Baronet.

Looking round, he perceived that he had so placed himself that his point of vision was exactly from between the two great letters, now half-obliterated, which he had been scrutinising just as he turned about to look toward the forest of Cloostedd.

'Yes, so I am,' said Sir Bale.

There was within him an excitement and misgiving, akin to the sensation of a man going into battle, and which corresponded with the sombre frown which Feltram wore, and the manifest change which had come upon him.

'Look on the stone steadily for a time, and tell me if you see a black mark, about the size of your hand, anywhere upon its surface,' said Feltram.

Sir Bale affected no airs of scepticism now; his imagination was stirred, and a sense of some unknown reality at the bottom of that which he had affected to treat before as illusion, inspired a strange interest in the experiment.

'Do you see it?' asked Feltram.

Sir Bale was watching patiently, but he had observed nothing of the kind.

Sharper, darker, more eager grew the face of Philip Feltram, as his eyes traversed the surface of that huge horizontal block.

'Now?' asked Feltram again.

No, he had seen nothing.

Feltram was growing manifestly uneasy, angry almost; he walked away a little, and back again, and then two or three times round the tree, with his hands shut, and treading the ground like a man trying to warm his feet, and so impatiently he returned, and looked again on the stone.

Sir Bale was still looking, and very soon said, drawing his brows together and looking hard,

'Ha!—yes—hush. There it is, by Jove!—wait—yes—there; it is growing quite plain.'

It seemed not as if a shadow fell upon the stone, but rather as if the stone became semi-transparent, and just under its surface was something dark—a hand, he thought it—and darker and darker it grew, and after some little wavering, it fixed itself movelessly, pointing, as he thought, toward the forest.

'It looks like a hand,' said he. 'By Jove, it *is* a hand—pointing towards the forest with a finger.'

'Don't mind the finger; look only on that black blurred mark, and from the point where you stand, taking that point for your direction, look to the forest. Take some tree or other landmark for an object, enter the forest there, and pursue the same line, as well as you can, until you find little flowers with leaves like wood-sorrel, and with tall stems and a red blossom, such as you have not seen before, growing among the trees, and follow where they seem to grow thickest, and there you will find him.'

All the time that Feltram was making this little address, Sir Bale was endeavouring to fix his route by such indications as Feltram described; and when he had succeeded in quite establishing the form of a peculiar tree—a melancholy ash, one huge limb of which had been blasted by lightning, and its partly stricken arm stood high and barkless, stretching its white fingers, as it were, into the forest, and signing the way for him—

'I have it now,' said he. 'Come, Feltram, you'll come a bit of the way with me.'

Feltram made no answer, but slowly shook his head, and turned and walked away, leaving Sir Bale to undertake his adventure alone.

The strange sound they had heard from the midst of the forest, like the rumble of a storm or the distant roar of a furnace, had quite ceased. Not a bird was hopping on the grass, or visible on bough or in the sky. Not a living creature was in sight—never was stillness more complete, or silence more oppressive.

It would have been ridiculous to give way to the odd reluctance which struggled within him. Feltram had strode down the slope, and was concealed by a screen of bushes from his view. So quite alone, and full of an interest quite new to him, he set out in quest of his adventures.

Chapter XX.

THE HAUNTED FOREST.

Sir Bale Mardykes walked in a straight line, by bush and scaur, over the undulating ground, to the blighted ash-tree; and as he approached it, its withered bough stretched more gigantically into the air, and the forest seemed to open where it pointed.

He passed it by, and in a few minutes had lost sight of it again, and was striding onward under the shadow of the forest, which already enclosed him. He was directing his march with all the care he could, in exactly that line which, according to Feltram's rule, had been laid down for him. Now and then, having, as soldiers say, taken an object, and fixed it well in his memory, he would pause and look about him.

As a boy he had never entered the wood so far; for he was under a prohibition, lest he should lose himself in its intricacies, and be benighted there. He had often heard that the wood was haunted, and that too would, when a boy, have deterred him. It was on this account that the scene was so new to him, and that he cared so often to stop and look about him. Here and there a vista opened, exhibiting the same utter desertion, and opening farther perspectives through the tall stems of the trees faintly seen in the solemn shadow. No flowers could he see, but once or twice a wood anemone, and now and then a tiny grove of wood-sorrel.

Huge oak-trees now began to mingle and show themselves more and more frequently among the other timber; and gradually the forest became a great oak wood unintruded upon by any less noble tree. Vast trunks curving outwards to the roots, and expanding again at the branches, stood like enormous columns, striking out their groining boughs, with the dark vaulting of a crypt.

As he walked under the shadow of these noble trees, suddenly his eye was struck by a strange little flower, nodding quite alone by the knotted root of one of those huge trees.

He stooped and picked it up, and as he plucked it, with a harsh scream just over his head, a large bird with heavy beating wings broke away from the midst of the branches. He could not see it, but he fancied the scream was like that of the huge mackaw whose ill-poised flight he had watched. This conjecture was but founded on the odd cry he had heard.

The flower was a curious one—a stem fine as a hair supported a little bell, that looked like a drop of blood, and never ceased trembling. He walked on, holding this in his fingers; and soon he saw another of the same odd type, then another at a shorter distance, then one a little to the right and another to the left, and farther on a little group, and at last the dark slope was all over trembling with these little bells, thicker and thicker as he descended a gentle declivity to the bank of the little brook, which flowing through the forest loses itself in the lake. The low murmur of this forest stream was almost the first sound, except the shriek of the bird that startled him a little time ago, which had disturbed the profound silence of the wood since he entered it. Mingling with the faint sound of the brook, he now heard a harsh human voice calling words at intervals, the purport of which he could not yet catch; and walking on, he saw, seated upon the grass, a strange figure, corpulent, with a great hanging nose, the whole face glowing like copper. He was dressed in a bottle-green cut-velvet coat, of the style of Queen Anne's reign, with a dusky crimson waistcoat, both overlaid with broad and tarnished gold lace, and his silk stockings on thick swollen legs, with great buckled shoes, straddling on the grass, were rolled up over his knees to his short breeches. This ill-favoured old fellow, with a powdered wig that came down to his shoulders, had a dice-box in each hand, and was apparently playing his left against his right, and calling the throws with a hoarse cawing voice.

Raising his black piggish eyes, he roared to Sir Bale, by name, to come and sit down, raising one of his dice-boxes, and then indicating a place on the grass opposite to him.

Now Sir Bale instantly guessed that this was the man, gipsy, warlock, call him what he might, of whom he had come in search.

With a strange feeling of curiosity, disgust, and awe, he drew near. He was resolved to do whatever this old man required of him, and to keep him, this time, in good humour.

Sir Bale did as he bid him, and sat down; and taking the box he presented, they began throwing turn about, with three dice, the copper-faced old man teaching him the value of the throws, as he proceeded, with many a curse and oath; and when he did not like a throw, grinning with a look of such real fury, that the master of Mardykes almost expected him to whip out his sword and prick him through as he sat before him.

After some time spent at this play, in which guineas passed now this way, now that, chucked across the intervening patch of grass, or rather moss, that served them for a green cloth, the old man roared over his shoulder,

'Drink;' and picking up a long-stemmed conical glass which Sir Bale had not observed before, he handed it over to the Baronet; and taking another in his fingers, he held it up, while a very tall slim old man, dressed in a white livery, with powdered hair and cadaverous face, which seemed to run nearly all into a long thin hooked nose, advanced with a flask in each hand. Looking at the unwieldly old man, with his heavy nose, powdered head, and all the bottle-green, crimson, and gold about him, and the long slim serving-man, with sharp beak, and white from head to heel, standing by him, Sir Bale was forcibly reminded of the great old macaw and the long slender kite, whose colours they, after their fashion, reproduced, with something, also indescribable, of the air and character of the birds. Not standing on ceremony, the old fellow held up his own glass first, which the white lackey filled from the flask, and then he filled Sir Bale's glass.

It was a large glass, and might have held about half a pint; and the liquor with which the servant filled it was something of the colour of an opal, and circles of purple and gold seemed to be spreading continually outward from the centre, and running inward from the rim, and crossing one another, so as to form a beautiful rippling net-work.

'I drink to your better luck next time,' said the old man, lifting his glass high, and winking with one eye, and leering knowingly with the other; 'and you know what I mean.'

Sir Bale put the liquor to his lips. Wine? Whatever it was, never had he tasted so delicious a flavour. He drained it to the bottom, and placing it on the grass beside him, and looking again at the old dicer, who was also setting down his glass, he saw, for the first time, the graceful figure of a young woman seated on the grass. She was dressed in deep mourning, had a black hood carelessly over her head, and, strangely, wore a black mask, such as are used at masquerades. So much of her throat and chin as he could see were beautifully white; and there was a prettiness in her air and figure which made him think what a beautiful creature she in all likelihood was. She was reclining slightly against the burly man in bottle-green and gold, and her arm was round his neck, and her slender white hand showed itself over his shoulders.

'Ho! my little Geaiette,' cried the old fellow hoarsely; 'it will be time that you and I should get home.—So, Bale Mardykes, I have nothing to object to you this time; you've crossed the lake, and you've played with me and won and lost, and drank your glass like a jolly devil, and now we know one another; and an acquaintance is made that will last. I'll let you go, and you'll come when I want you. And now you'll want to know what horse will win next month at Rindermere races.—Whisper me, lass, and I'll tell him.'

So her lips, under the black curtain, crept close to his ear, and she whispered.

'It will be Rainbow,' said the old man harshly. 'And now make your best speed out of the forest, or I'll set my black dogs at your heels, ho, ho, ho! and we may chance to pull you down. Away!'

He cried this last order with a look so black and so savage a shake of his huge fist, that Sir Bale, merely making his general bow to the group, clapped his hat on his head, and hastily began his retreat; but the same discordant voice yelled after him:

'You'll want that, you fool; pick it up.' And there came hurtling after him a great leather bag, stained, and stuffed with a heavy burden, and bounding by him it stopped with a little wheel that brought it exactly before his feet.

He picked it up, and found it heavy.

Turning about to make his acknowledgments, he saw the two persons in full retreat; the profane old scoundrel in the bottle-green limping and stumbling, yet bowling along at a wonderful rate, with many a jerk and reel, and the slender lady in black gliding away by his side into the inner depths of the forest.

So Sir Bale, with a strange chill, and again in utter solitude, pursued his retreat, with his burden, at a swifter pace, and after an hour or so had recovered the point where he had entered the forest, and passing by the druidic stone and the mighty oak, saw down the glen at his right, standing by the edge of the lake, Philip Feltram, close to the bow of the boat.

CHAPTER XXI.

RINDERMERE.

FELTRAM looked grim and agitated when Sir Bale came up to him, as he stood on the flat stone by which the boat was moored.

'You found him?' said he.

'Yes.'

'And the lady in black was there?'

'She was.'

'And you played with him?'

'Yes.'

'And what is that in your hand?'

'A bag of something, I fancy money; it is heavy; he threw it after me. We shall see just now; let us get away.'

'He gave you some of his wine to drink?' said Feltram, looking darkly in his face; but there was a laugh in his eyes.

'Yes; of course I drank it; my object was to please him.'

'To be sure.'

The faint wind that carried them across the lake had quite subsided by the time they had reached the side where they now were.

There was now not wind enough to fill the sail, and it was already evening.

'Give me an oar; we can pull her over in little more than an hour,' said Sir Bale; 'only let us get away.'

He got into the boat, sat down, and placed the leather bag with its heavy freightage at his feet, and took an oar. Feltram loosed the rope and shoved the boat off; and taking his seat also, they began to pull together, without another word, until, in about ten minutes, they had got a considerable way off the Cloostedd shore.

The leather bag was too clumsy a burden to conceal; besides, Feltram knew all about the transaction, and Sir Bale had no need to make a secret. The bag was old and soiled, and tied about the 'neck' with a long leather thong, and it seemed to have been sealed with red wax, fragments of which were still sticking to it.

He got it open, and found it full of guineas.

'Halt!' cried Sir Bale, delighted, for he had half apprehended a trick upon his hopes; 'gold it is, and a lot of it, by Jove!'

Feltram did not seem to take the slightest interest in the matter. Sulkily and drowsily he was leaning with his elbow on his knee, and it seemed thinking of something far away. Sir Bale could not wait to count them any longer. He reckoned them on the bench, and found two thousand.

It took some time; and when he had got them back into the leather bag, and tied them up again, Feltram, with a sudden start, said sharply,

'Come, take your oar—unless you like the lake by night; and see, there will soon be a wind up from Golden Friars!'

He cast a wild look towards Mardykes Hall and Snakes Island, and applying himself to his oar, told Sir Bale to take his also; and nothing loath, the Baronet did so.

It was slow work, for the boat was not built for speed; and by the time they had got about midway, the sun went down, and twilight and the melancholy flush of the sunset tints were upon the lake and fells.

'Ho! here comes the breeze—up from Golden Friars,' said Feltram; 'we shall have enough to fill the sails now. If you don't fear spirits and Snakes Island, it is all the better for us it should blow from that point. If it blew from Mardykes now, it would be a stiff pull for you and me to get this tub home.'

Talking as if to himself, and laughing low, he adjusted the sail and took the tiller, and so, yielding to the rising breeze, the boat glided slowly toward still distant Mardykes Hall.

The moon came out, and the shore grew misty, and the towering fells rose like sheeted giants; and leaning on the gunwale of the boat, Sir Bale, with the rush and gurgle of the water on the boat's side sounding faintly in his ear, thought of his day's adventure, which seemed to him like a dream—incredible but for the heavy bag that lay between his feet.

As they passed Snakes Island, a little mist, like a fragment of a fog, seemed to drift with them, and Sir Bale fancied that whenever it came near the boat's side she made a dip, as if strained toward the water; and Feltram always put out his hand, as if waving it from him, and the mist seemed to obey the gesture; but returned again and again, and the same thing always happened.

It was three weeks after, that Sir Bale, sitting up in his bed, very pale and wan, with his silk night-cap nodding on one side, and his thin hand extended on the coverlet, where the doctor had been feeling his pulse, in his darkened room, related all the wonders of this day to Doctor Torvey. The doctor had attended him through a fever which followed immediately upon his visit to Cloostedd.

'And, my dear sir, by Jupiter, can you really believe all that delirium to be sober fact?' said the doctor, sitting by the bedside, and actually laughing.

'I can't help believing it, because I can't distinguish in any way between all that and everything else that happened, and which I must believe. And, except that this is more wonderful, I can find no reason to reject it, that does not as well apply to all the rest.'

'Come, come, my dear sir, this will never do—nothing is more common. These illusions accompanying fever frequently antedate the attack, and the man is actually raving before he knows he is ill.'

'But what do you make of that bag of gold?'

'Some one has lent it. You had better ask all about it of Feltram when you can see him; for in speaking to me he seemed to know all about it, and certainly did not seem to think the matter at all out of the commonplace. It is just like that fisherman's story, about the hand that drew Feltram into the water on the night he was nearly drowned. Every one can see what that was. Why of course it was simply the reflection of his own hand in the water, in that vivid lightning. When you have been out a little and have gained strength you will shake off these dreams.'

'I should not wonder,' said Sir Bale.

It is not to be supposed that Sir Bale reported all that was in his memory respecting his strange vision, if such it was, at Cloostedd. He made a selection of the incidents, and threw over the whole adventure an entirely accidental character, and described the money which the old man had thrown to him as amounting to a purse of five guineas, and mentioned nothing of the passages which bore on the coming race.

Good Doctor Torvey, therefore, reported only that Sir Bale's delirium had left two or three illusions sticking in his memory.

But if they were illusions, they survived the event of his recovery, and remained impressed on his memory with the sharpness of very recent and accurately observed fact.

He was resolved on going to the races of Rindermere, where, having in his possession so weighty a guarantee as the leather purse, he was determined to stake it all boldly on Rainbow—against which horse he was glad to hear there were very heavy odds.

The race came off. One horse was scratched, another bolted, the rider of a third turned out to have lost a buckle and three halfpence, and so was an ounce and a half under weight, a fourth knocked down the post near Rinderness churchyard, and was held to have done it with his left instead of his right knee, and so had run at the wrong side. The result was that Rainbow came in first, and I should be afraid to say how much Sir Bale won. It was a sum that paid off a heavy debt, and left his affairs in a much more manageable state.

From this time Sir Bale prospered. He visited Cloostedd no more; but Feltram often crossed to that lonely shore as heretofore, and it is believed conveyed to him messages which guided his betting. One thing is certain, his luck never deserted him. His debts disappeared; and his love of Continental life seemed to have departed. He became content with Mardykes Hall, laid out money on it, and although he never again cared to cross the lake, he seemed to like the scenery.

In some respects, however, he lived exactly the same odd and unpopular life. He saw no one at Mardykes Hall. He practised a very strict reserve. The neighbours laughed at and disliked him, and he was voted, whenever any accidental contact arose, a very disagreeable man; and he had a shrewd and ready sarcasm that made them afraid of him, and himself more disliked.

Odd rumours prevailed also about his household. It was said that his old relations with Philip Feltram had become reversed; and that he was as meek as a mouse, and Feltram the bully now. It was also said that Mrs. Julaper had, one Sunday evening when she drank tea at the Vicar's, told his good lady very mysteriously, and with many charges of secrecy, that Sir Bale was none the better of his late-found wealth; that he had a load upon his spirits, that he was afraid of Feltram, and so was every one else, more or less, in the house; that he was either mad or worse; and that it was an eerie dwelling, and strange company, and she should be glad herself of a change.

Good Mrs. Bedel told her friend Mrs. Torvey; and all Golden Friars heard all this, and a good deal more, in an incredibly short time.

All kinds of rumours now prevailed in Golden Friars, connecting Sir Bale's successes on the turf with some mysterious doings in Cloostedd Forest. Philip Feltram laughed when he heard these stories—especially when he heard the story that a supernatural personage had lent the Baronet a purse full of money.

'You should not talk to Doctor Torvey so, sir,' said he grimly; 'he's the greatest tattler in the town. It was old Farmer Trebeck, who could buy and sell us all down here, who lent that money. Partly from good-will, but not without acknowledgment. He has my hand for the first, not worth much, and yours to a bond for the two thousand guineas you brought home with you. It seems strange you should not remember that venerable and kind old farmer whom you talked with so long that day. His grandson, who expects to stand well in his will, being a trainer in Lord Varney's stables, has sometimes a wrinkle to give, and he is the source of your information.'

'By Jove, I must be a bit mad, then, that's all,' said Sir Bale, with a smile and a shrug.

Philip Feltram moped about the house, and did precisely what he pleased. The change which had taken place in him became more and more pronounced. Dark and stern he always looked, and often malignant. He was like a man possessed of one evil thought which never left him.

There was, besides, the good old Gothic superstition of a bargain or sale of the Baronet's soul to the arch-fiend. This was, of course, very cautiously whispered in a place where he had influence. It was only a coarser and directer version of a suspicion, that in a more credulous generation penetrated a level of society quite exempt from such follies in our day.

One evening at dusk, Sir Bale, sitting after his dinner in his window, saw the tall figure of Feltram, like a dark streak, standing movelessly by the lake. An unpleasant feeling thrilled him, and then an impatience. He got up, and having primed himself with two glasses of brandy, walked down to the edge of the lake, and placed himself beside Feltram.

'Looking down from the window,' said he, nerved with his Dutch courage, 'and seeing you standing like a post, do you know what I began to think of?'

Feltram looked at him, but answered nothing.

'I began to think of taking a wife—*marrying*.'

Feltram nodded. The announcement had not produced the least effect.

'Why the devil will you make me so uncomfortable! can't you be like yourself—what you *were*, I mean? I won't go on living here alone with you. I'll take a wife, I tell you. I'll choose a good church-going woman, that will have every man, woman, and child in the house on their marrowbones twice a day, morning and evening, and three times on Sundays. How will you like that?'

'Yes, you will be married,' said Feltram, with a quiet decision which chilled Sir Bale, for he had by no means made up his mind to that desperate step.

Feltram slowly walked away, and that conversation ended.

Now an odd thing happened about this time. There was a family of Feltram—county genealogists could show how related to the vanished family of Cloostedd—living at that time on their estate not far from Carlisle. Three co-heiresses now represented it. They were great beauties—the belles of their county in their day.

One was married to Sir Oliver Haworth of Haworth, a great family in those times. He was a knight of the shire, and had refused a baronetage, and, it was said, had his eye on a peerage. The other sister was married to Sir William Walsingham, a wealthy baronet; and the third and youngest, Miss Janet, was still unmarried, and at home at Cloudesly Hall, where her aunt, Lady Harbottle, lived with her, and made a dignified chaperon.

Now it so fell out that Sir Bale, having business at Carlisle, and knowing old Lady Harbottle, paid his respects at Cloudesly Hall; and being no less than five-and-forty years of age, was, for the first time in his life, seriously in love.

Miss Janet was extremely pretty—a fair beauty with brilliant red lips and large blue eyes, and ever so many pretty dimples when she talked and smiled. It was odd, but not perhaps against the course of nature, that a man, though so old as he, and quite *blasé*, should fall at last under that fascination.

But what are we to say of the strange infatuation of the young lady? No one could tell why she liked him. It was a craze. Her family were against it, her intimates, her old nurse—all would not do; and the oddest thing was, that he seemed to take no pains to please her. The end of this strange courtship was that he married her; and she came home to Mardykes Hall, determined to please everybody, and to be the happiest woman in England.

With her came a female cousin, a good deal her senior, past thirty,—Gertrude Mainyard, pale and sad, but very gentle, and with all the prettiness that can belong to her years.

This young lady has a romance. Her hero is far away in India;

and she, content to await his uncertain return with means to accomplish the hope of their lives, in that frail chance has long embarked all the purpose and love of her life.

When Lady Mardykes came home, a new leaf was, as the phrase is, turned over. The neighbours and all the country people were willing to give the Hall a new trial. There was visiting and returning of visits; and young Lady Mardykes was liked and admired. It could not indeed have been otherwise. But here the improvement in the relations of Mardykes Hall with other homes ceased. On one excuse or another Sir Bale postponed or evaded the hospitalities which establish intimacies. Some people said he was jealous of his young and beautiful wife. But for the most part his reserve was set down to the old inhospitable cause, some ungenial defect in his character; and in a little time the tramp of horses and roll of carriage-wheels were seldom heard up or down the broad avenue of Mardykes Hall.

Sir Bale liked this seclusion; and his wife, 'so infatuated with her idolatry of that graceless old man,' as surrounding young ladies said, that she was well content to forego the society of the county people for a less interrupted enjoyment of that of her husband. 'What she could see in him' to interest or amuse her so, that for his sake she was willing to be 'buried alive in that lonely place,' the same critics were perpetually wondering.

A year and more passed thus; for the young wife, happily—*very* happily indeed, had it not been for one topic on which she and her husband could not agree. This was Philip Feltram; and an odd quarrel it was.

CHAPTER XXII.

SIR BALE IS FRIGHTENED.

To Feltram she had conceived, at first sight, a horror. It was not a mere antipathy; fear mingled largely in it. Although she did not see him often, this restless dread grew upon her so, that she urged his dismissal upon Sir Bale, offering to provide herself for him a handsome annuity, charged on that part of her property which, by her marriage-settlement, had remained in her power. There was a time when Sir Bale was only too anxious to get rid of him. But that was changed now. Nothing could now induce the Baronet to part with him. He at first evaded and resisted quietly. But, urged with a perseverance to which he was unused, he at last broke into fury that appalled her, and swore that if he was worried more upon the subject, he would leave her and the country, and see neither again. This exhibition of violence affrighted her all the more by reason of the contrast; for up to this he had been an uxorious husband. Lady Mardykes was in hysterics, and thoroughly frightened, and remained in her room for two or three days. Sir Bale went up to London about business, and was not home for more than a week. This was the first little squall that disturbed the serenity of their sky.

This point, therefore, was settled; but soon there came other things to sadden Lady Mardykes. There occurred a little incident, soon after Sir Bale's return from London, which recalled the topic on which they had so nearly quarrelled.

Sir Bale had a dressing-room, remote from the bedrooms, in which he sat and read and sometimes smoked. One night, after the house was all quiet, the Baronet being still up, the bell of this dressing-room rang long and furiously. It was such a peal as a person in extreme terror might ring. Lady Mardykes, with her maid in her room, heard it; and in great alarm she ran in her dressing-gown down the gallery to Sir Bale's room. Mallard the butler had already arrived, and was striving to force the door, which was secured. It gave way just as she reached it, and she rushed through.

Sir Bale was standing with the bell-rope in his hand, in the extremest agitation, looking like a ghost; and Philip Feltram was sitting in his chair, with a dark smile fixed upon him. For a minute she thought he had attempted to assassinate his master. She could not otherwise account for the scene.

There had been nothing of the kind, however; as her husband assured her again and again, as she lay sobbing on his breast, with her arms about his neck.

'To her dying hour,' she afterwards said to her cousin, 'she never could forget the dreadful look in Feltram's face.'

No explanation of that scene did she ever obtain from Sir Bale, nor any clue to the cause of the agony that was so powerfully expressed in his countenance. Thus much only she learned from him, that Feltram had sought that interview for the purpose of announcing his departure, which was to take place within the year.

'You are not sorry to hear that. But if you knew all, you might. Let the curse fly where it may, it will come back to roost. So, darling, let us discuss him no more. Your wish is granted, *dis iratis*.'

Some crisis, in this interview, seemed to have occurred in the relations between Sir Bale and Feltram. Henceforward they seldom exchanged a word; and when they did speak, it was coldly and shortly, like men who were nearly strangers.

One day in the courtyard, Sir Bale, seeing Feltram leaning upon the parapet that overlooks the lake, approached him, and said in a low tone,

'I've been thinking, if we—that is, *I*—do owe that money to old Trebeck, it is high time I should pay it. I was ill, and had lost my head at the time; but it turned out luckily, and it ought to be paid. I don't like the idea of a bond turning up, and a lot of interest.'

'The old fellow meant it for a present. He is richer than you are; he wished to give the family a lift. He has destroyed the bond, I believe, and in no case will he take payment.'

'No fellow has a right to force his money on another,' answered Sir Bale. 'I never asked him. Besides, as you know, I was not really myself, and the whole thing seems to me quite different from what you say it was; and, so far as my brain is concerned, it was all a phantasmagoria; but, as you say, it was he.'

'Every man is accountable for what he intends and for what he *thinks* he does,' said Feltram cynically.

'Well, I'm accountable for dealing with that wicked old dicer I *thought* I saw—isn't that it? But I must pay old Trebeck all the same, since the money was his. Can you manage a meeting?'

'Look down there. Old Trebeck has just landed; he will sleep to-night at the George and Dragon, to meet his cattle in the morning at Golden Friars fair. You can speak to him yourself.'

So saying, Feltram glided away, leaving to Sir Bale the task of opening the matter to the wealthy farmer of Cloostedd Fells.

A broad flight of steps leads down from the courtyard to the level of the jetty at the lake; and Sir Bale descended, and accosted the venerable farmer, who was bluff, honest, and as frank as a man can be who speaks a *patois* which hardly a living man but himself can understand.

Sir Bale asked him to come to the Hall and take luncheon; but Trebeck was in haste. Cattle had arrived which he wanted to look at, and a pony awaited him on the road hard by to Golden Friars; and the old fellow must mount and away.

Then Sir Bale, laying his hand upon his arm in a manner that was at once lofty and affectionate, told in his ears the subject on which he wished to be understood.

The old farmer looked hard at him, and shook his head and laughed in a way that would have been insupportable in a house, and told him, 'I hev narra bond o' thoine, mon.'

'I know how that is; so does Philip Feltram.'

'Well?'

'Well, I must replace the money.'

The old man laughed again, and in his outlandish dialect told him to wait till he asked him.

Sir Bale pressed it, but the old fellow put it off with outlandish banter; and as the Baronet grew testy, the farmer only waxed more and more hilarious, and at last, mounting his shaggy pony, rode off, still laughing, at a canter to Golden Friars; and when he reached Golden Friars, and got into the hall of the George and Dragon, he asked Richard Turnbull with a chuckle if he ever knew a man refuse an offer of money, or a man want to pay who did not owe; and inquired whether the Squire down at Mardykes Hall mightn't be a bit 'wrang in t' garrets.' All this, however, other people said, was intended merely to conceal the fact that he really had, through sheer loyalty, lent the money, or rather bestowed it, thinking the old family in jeopardy, and meaning a gift, was determined to hear no more about it. I can't say; I only know people held, some by one interpretation, some by another.

As the caterpillar sickens and changes its hue when it is about to undergo its transmutation, so an odd change took place in Feltram. He grew even more silent and morose; he seemed always in an agitation and a secret rage. He used to walk through the woodlands on the slopes of the fells above Mardykes, muttering to himself, picking up the rotten sticks with which the ground was strewn, breaking them in his hands, and hurling them from him, and stamping on the earth as he paced up and down.

One night a thunder-storm came on, the wind blowing gently up from Golden Friars. It was a night black as pitch, illuminated only by the intermittent glare of the lightning. At the foot of the stairs Sir Bale met Feltram, whom he had not seen for some days. He had his cloak and hat on.

'I am going to Cloostedd to-night,' he said; 'and if all is as I expect, I sha'n't return. We remember all, you and I.' And he nodded and walked down the passage.

Sir Bale knew that a crisis had happened in his own life. He felt faint and ill, and returned to the room where he had been sitting. Throughout that melancholy night he did not go to his bed.

In the morning he learned that Marlyn, who had been out late, saw Feltram get the boat off, and sail towards the other side. The night was so dark that he could only see him start; but the wind was light and coming up the lake, so that without a tack he could easily make the other side.

Feltram did not return. The boat was found fast to the ring at Cloostedd landing-place.

Lady Mardykes was relieved, and for a time was happier than ever. It was different with Sir Bale; and afterwards her sky grew dark also.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A LADY IN BLACK.

SHORTLY after this, there arrived at the George and Dragon a stranger. He was a man somewhat past forty, embrowned by distant travel, and, his years considered, wonderfully good-looking. He had good eyes; his dark-brown hair had no sprinkling of gray in it; and his kindly smile showed very white and even teeth. He made many inquiries about neighbours, especially respecting Mardykes Hall; and the answers seemed to interest him profoundly. He inquired after Philip Feltram, and shed tears when he heard that he was no longer at Mardykes Hall, and that Trebeck or other friends could give him no tidings of him.

And then he asked Richard Turnbull to show him to a quiet room; and then, taking the honest fellow by the hand, he said,

'Mr. Turnbull, don't you know me?'

'No, sir,' said the host of the George and Dragon, after a puzzled stare, 'I can't say I do, sir.'

The stranger smiled a little sadly, and shook his head; and with a little laugh, still holding his hand in a very friendly way, he said,

'I should have known you anywhere, Mr. Turnbull—anywhere on earth or water. Had you turned up on the Himalayas, or in a junk on the Canton river, or as a dervish in the mosque of St. Sophia, I should have recognised my old friend, and asked what news from Golden Friars. But of course I'm changed. You were a little my senior; and one advantage among many you have over your juniors is that you don't change as we do. I have played many a game of hand-ball in the inn-yard of the George, Mr. Turnbull. You often wagered a pot of ale on my play; you used to say I'd make the best player of fives, and the best singer of a song, within ten miles round the meer. You used to have me behind the bar when I was a boy, with more of an appetite than I have now. I was then at Mardykes Hall, and used to go back in old Marlyn's boat. Is old Marlyn still alive?'

'Ay, that—he—is,' said Turnbull slowly, as he eyed the stranger again very carefully. 'I don't know who you can be, sir, unless you are—the boy—William Feltram. La! he was seven or eight years younger that Philip. But, lawk!—Well—By Jen, and *be* you Willie Feltram? But no, you can't!'

'Ay, Mr. Turnbull, that very boy—Willie Feltram—even he, and no other; and now you'll shake hands with me, not so formally, but like an old friend.'

'Ay, that I will,' said honest Richard Turnbull, with a great smile, and a hearty grasp of his guest's hand; and they both laughed together, and the younger man's eyes, for he was an affectionate fool, filled up with tears.

'And I want you to tell me this,' said William, after they had talked a little quietly, 'now that there is no one to interrupt us, what has become of my brother Philip? I heard from a friend an account of his health that has caused me unspeakable anxiety.'

'His health was not bad; no, he was a hardy lad, and liked a walk over the fells, or a pull on the lake; but he was a bit daft, every one said, and a changed man; and, in troth, they say the air o' Mardykes don't agree with every one, no more than him. But that's a tale that's neither here nor there.'

'Yes,' said William, 'that was what they told me—his mind affected. God help and guard us! I have been unhappy ever since;

and if I only knew it was well with poor Philip, I think I should be too happy. And where is Philip now?'

'He crossed the lake one night, having took leave of Sir Bale. They thought he was going to old Trebeck's up the Fells. He likes the Feltrams, and likes the folk at Mardykes Hall—though those two familiars was not always o'er kind to one another. But Trebeck seed nowt o' him, nor no one else; and what has gone wi' him none can tell.'

'I heard that also,' said William with a deep sigh. 'But I hoped it had been cleared up by now, and something happier been known of the poor fellow by this time. I'd give a great deal to know—I don't know what I *would* not give to know—I'm so unhappy about him. And now, my good old friend, tell your people to get me a chaise, for I must go to Mardykes Hall; and, first, let me have a room to dress in.'

At Mardykes Hall a pale and pretty lady was looking out, alone, from the stone-shafted drawing-room window across the courtyard and the balustrade, on which stood many a great stone chalice with flowers, whose leaves were half shed and gone with the winds—emblem of her hopes. The solemn melancholy of the towering fells, the ripple of the lonely lake, deepened her sadness.

The unwonted sound of carriage-wheels awoke her from her reverie.

Before the chaise reached the steps, a hand from its window had seized the handle, the door was thrown open, and William Feltram jumped out.

She was in the hall, she knew not how; and, with a wild scream and a sob, she threw herself into his arms.

Here at last was an end of the long waiting, the dejection which had reached almost the point of despair. And like two rescued from shipwreck, they clung together in an agony of happiness.

William had come back with no very splendid fortune. It was enough, and only enough, to enable them to marry. Prudent people would have thought it, very likely, too little. But he was now home in England, with health unimpaired by his long sojourn in the East, and with intelligence and energies improved by the discipline of his arduous struggle with fortune. He reckoned, therefore, upon one way or other adding something to their income; and he knew that a few hundreds a year would make them happier than hundreds of thousands could other people.

It was five years since they had parted in France, where a journey of importance to the Indian firm, whose right hand he was, had brought him.

The refined tastes that are supposed to accompany gentle blood, his love of art, his talent for music and drawing, had accidentally attracted the attention of the little travelling-party which old Lady

Harbottle chaperoned. Miss Janet, now Lady Mardykes, learning that his name was Feltram, made inquiry through a common friend, and learned what interested her still more about him. It ended in an acquaintance, which his manly and gentle nature and his entertaining qualities soon improved into an intimacy.

Feltram had chosen to work his own way, being proud, and also prosperous enough to prevent his pride, in this respect, from being placed under too severe a pressure of temptation. He heard not from but of his brother, through a friend in London, and more lately from Gertrude, whose account of him was sad and even alarming.

When Lady Mardykes came in, her delight knew no bounds. She had already formed a plan for their future, and was not to be put off—William Feltram was to take the great grazing farm that belonged to the Mardykes estate; or, if he preferred it, to farm it for her, sharing the profits. She wanted something to interest her, and this was just the thing. It was hardly half-a-mile away, up the lake, and there was such a comfortable house and garden, and she and Gertrude could be as much together as ever almost; and, in fact, Gertrude and her husband could be nearly always at Mardykes Hall.

So eager and entreating was she, that there was no escape. The plan was adopted immediately on their marriage, and no happier neighbours for a time were ever known.

But was Lady Mardykes content? was she even exempt from that heartache which each mortal thinks he has all to himself? The longing of her life was for children; and again and again had her hopes been disappointed.

One tiny pretty little baby indeed was born, and lived for two years, and then died; and none had come to supply its place and break the childless silence of the great old nursery. That was her sorrow; a greater one than men can understand.

Another source of grief was this: that Sir Bale Mardykes conceived a dislike to William Feltram that was unaccountable. At first suppressed, it betrayed itself negatively only; but with time it increased; and in the end the Baronet made little secret of his wish to get rid of him. Many and ingenious were the annoyances he contrived; and at last he told his wife plainly that he wished William Feltram to find some other abode for himself.

Lady Mardykes pleaded earnestly, and even with tears; for if Gertrude were to leave the neighbourhood, she well knew how utterly solitary her own life would become.

Sir Bale at last vouchsafed some little light as to his motives. There was an old story, he told her, that his estate would go to a Feltram. He had an instinctive distrust of that family. It was a feeling not given him for nothing; it might be the means of defeating their plotting and strategy. Old Trebeck, he fancied, had a finger in it. Philip Feltram had told him that Mardykes was to pass away to a Feltram. Well, they might conspire; but he would take what care he could that the estate should not be stolen from his family. He did not want his wife stript of her jointure, or his children, if he had any, left without bread.

All this sounded very like madness; but the idea was first propounded by Philip Feltram. His own jealousy was at bottom founded on a superstition which he would not avow and could hardly define. He bitterly blamed himself for having permitted William Feltram to place himself where he was.

In the midst of these annoyances William Feltram was seriously thinking of throwing up the farm, and seeking similar occupation somewhere else.

One day, walking alone in the thick wood that skirts the lake near his farm, he was discussing this problem with himself; and every now and then he repeated his question, 'Shall I throw it up, and give him the lease back if he likes?' On a sudden he heard a voice near him say:

'Hold it, you fool!—hold hard, you fool!—hold it, you fool!'

The situation being lonely, he was utterly puzzled to account for the interruption, until on a sudden a huge parrot, green, crimson, and yellow, plunged from among the boughs over his head to the ground, and partly flying, and partly hopping and tumbling along, got lamely, but swiftly, out of sight among the thick underwood; and he could neither start it nor hear it any more. The interruption reminded him of that which befell Robinson Crusoe. It was more singular, however; for he owned no such bird; and its strangeness impressed the omen all the more.

He related it when he got home to his wife; and as people when living a solitary life, and also suffering, are prone to superstition, she did not laugh at the adventure, as in a healthier state of spirits, I suppose, she would.

They continued, however, to discuss the question together; and all the more industriously as a farm of the same kind, only some fifteen miles away, was now offered to all bidders, under another landlord. Gertrude, who felt Sir Bale's unkindness all the more that she was a distant cousin of his, as it had proved on comparing notes, was very strong in favour of the change, and had been urging it with true feminine ingenuity and persistence upon her husband. A very singular dream rather damped her ardour, however, and it appeared thus:

She had gone to her bed full of this subject; and she thought, although she could not remember having done so, had fallen asleep. She was still thinking, as she had been all the day, about leaving the farm. It seemed to her that she was quite awake, and a candle burning all the time in the room, awaiting the return of her husband, who was away at the fair near Haworth; she saw the interior of the room distinctly. It was a sultry night, and a little bit of the window was raised. A very slight sound in that direction attracted her attention; and to her surprise she saw a jay hop upon the window-sill, and into the room.

Up sat Gertrude, surprised and a little startled at the visit of so large a bird, without presence of mind for the moment even to frighten it away, and staring at it, as they say, with all her eyes. A sofa stood at the foot of the bed; and under this the bird swiftly hopped. She extended her hand now to take the bell-rope at the left side of the bed, and in doing so displaced the curtains, which were open only at the foot. She was amazed there to see a lady dressed entirely in black, and with the old-fashioned hood over her head. She was young and pretty, and looked kindly at her, but with now and then the slight contraction of lips and eyebrows that indicates pain. This little twitching was momentary, and recurred, it seemed, about once or twice in a minute.

How it was that she was not frightened on seeing this lady, standing like an old friend at her bedside, she could not afterwards understand. Some influence besides the kindness of her look prevented any sensation of terror at the time. With a very white hand the young lady held a white handkerchief pressed to her bosom at the top of her bodice.

‘Who are you?’ asked Gertrude.

‘I am a kinswoman, although you don’t know me; and I have come to tell you that you must not leave Faxwell’ (the name of the place) ‘or Janet. Abide your fortune here. If you go, I will go with you; and I can make you fear me.’

Her voice was very distinct, but also very faint, with something undulatory in it, that seemed to enter Gertrude’s head rather than her ear.

Saying this she smiled horribly, and, lifting her handkerchief, disclosed for a moment a great wound in her breast, in which Gertrude saw the head of a snake writhing.

Hereupon she uttered a wild scream of terror, and, diving under the bed-clothes, remained more dead than alive there, until her maid, alarmed by her cry, came in, and having searched the room, and shut the window at her desire, did all in her power to comfort her.

If this was a nightmare, and embodied only by a form of expression which in some states belongs to the imagination, a leading idea in the controversy in which her mind had long been employed, it had at least the effect of deciding her against leaving Faxwell. And so that point was settled; and unpleasant relations continued between the tenants of the farm and the master of Mardykes Hall.

To Lady Mardykes all this was very painful, although Sir Bale did not insist upon making a separation between his wife and her cousin. But to Mardykes Hall that cousin came no more. Even Lady Mardykes thought it better to see her at Faxwell than to risk a meeting in the temper in which Sir Bale then was. And thus several years passed.

No tidings of Philip Feltram were heard; and, in fact, none ever reached that part of the world; and if it had not been highly improbable that he could have drowned himself in the lake without his body sooner or later having risen to the surface, it would have been concluded that he had either accidentally or by design made away with himself in its waters.

Over Mardykes Hall there was a gloom—no sound of children's voices was heard there, and even the hope of that merry advent had died out.

This disappointment had no doubt helped to fix in Sir Bale's mind the idea of the insecurity of his property, and the morbid fancy that William Feltram and old Trebeck were conspiring to seize it; than which, I need hardly say, no imagination more insane could have fixed itself in his mind.

In other things, however, Sir Bale was shrewd and sharp, a clear and rapid man of business, and although this was a strange whim, it was not so unnatural in a man who was by nature so prone to suspicion as Sir Bale Mardykes.

During the years, now seven, that had elapsed since the marriage of Sir Bale and Miss Janet Feltram, there had happened but one event, except the death of their only child, to place them in mourning. That was the decease of Sir William Walsingham, the husband of Lady Mardykes' sister. She now lived in a handsome old dower-house at Islington, and being wealthy made, now and then, an excursion to Mardykes Hall, in which she was sometimes accompanied by her sister Lady Haworth. Sir Oliver being a Parliament man was much in London and deep in politics and intrigue, and subject, as convivial rogues are, to occasional hard hits from the gout.

But change and separation had made no alteration in these ladies' mutual affections, and no three sisters were ever more attached.

Was Lady Mardykes happy with her lord? A woman so gentle and loving as she, is a happy wife with any husband who is not an absolute brute. There must have been, I suppose, some good about Sir Bale. His wife was certainly deeply attached to him. She admired his wisdom, and feared his inflexible will, and altogether made of him a domestic idol. To acquire this enviable position, I suspect there must be something not essentially disagreeable about a man. At all events, what her neighbours good-naturedly termed her infatuation continued, and indeed rather improved by time.

THE HAUNTED BARONET

BY J. S. LE FANU,

AUTHOR OF 'UNCLE SILAS,' ETC.

Chapter XXIV. An old Portrait.

Sir Bale—whom some people remembered a gay and convivial man, not to say a profligate one—had grown to be a very gloomy man indeed. There was something weighing upon his mind; and I daresay some of the good gossips of Golden Friars, had there been any materials for such a case, would have believed that Sir Bale had murdered Philip Feltram, and was now the victim of the worm and fire of remorse.

The gloom of the master of the house made his very servants gloomy, and the house itself looked sombre, as if it had been startled with strange and dismal sights.

Lady Mardykes was something of an artist. She had lighted lately, in an out-of-the-way room, upon a dozen or more old portraits. Several of these were full-lengths; and she was—with the help of her maid, both in long aprons, amid sponges and basins, soft handkerchiefs and varnish-pots and brushes—busy in removing the dust and smoke-stains, and in laying-on the varnish, which brought out the colouring, and made the transparent shadows yield up their long-buried treasures of finished detail.

Against the wall stood a full-length portrait as Sir Bale entered the room; having, for a wonder, a word to say to his wife.

'O,' said the pretty lady, turning to him in her apron, and with her brush in her hand, 'we are in such a pickle, Munnings and I, we have been cleaning these old pictures. Mrs. Julaper says they are the pictures that came from Cloostedd Hall long ago. They were buried in dust in the dark room in the clock-tower. Here is such a characteristic one. It has a long powdered wig—George the First or Second, I don't know which—and such a combination of colours, and such a face. It seems starting out of the canvas, and all but speaks. Do look; that is, I mean, Bale, if you can spare time.'

Sir Bale abstractedly drew near, and looked over his wife's shoulder on the full-length portrait that stood before him; and as he did so a strange expression for a moment passed over his face.

The picture represented a man of swarthy countenance, with signs of the bottle glowing through the dark skin; small fierce pig eyes, a rather flat pendulous nose, and a grim forbidding mouth, with a large mole a little above it. On the head hung one of those full-bottomed powdered wigs that look like a cloud of cotton-wadding; a lace cravat was about his neck; he wore short black-velvet breeches with stockings rolled over them, a bottle-green coat of cut velvet, and a crimson waistcoat with long flaps; coat and waistcoat both heavily laced with gold. He wore a sword, and leaned upon a crutch-handled cane, and his figure and aspect indicated a swollen and gouty state. He could not be far from sixty. There was uncommon force in this fierce and forbidding-looking portrait. Lady Mardykes said,

'What wonderful dresses they wore! How like a fine magic-lantern figure he looks! What gorgeous colouring! it is like the plumage of a mackaw; and what a claw his hand is! and that huge broken beak of a nose! Isn't he like a wicked old mackaw?'

'Where did you find that?' said Sir Bale.

Surprised at his tone, she looked round, and was still more surprised at his looks.

'I told you, dear Bale, I found them in the clock-tower. I hope I did right; it was not wrong bringing them here? I ought to have asked. Are you vexed, Bale?'

'Vexed! not I. I only wish it was in the fire. I must have seen that picture when I was a child. I hate to look at it. I raved about it once, when I was ill. I don't know who it is; I don't remember when I saw it. I wish you'd tell them to burn it.'

'It is one of the Feltrams,' she answered. '"Sir Hugh Feltram" is on the frame at the foot; and old Mrs. Julaper says he was the father of the unhappy lady who was said to have been drowned near Snakes Island.'

'Well, suppose he is; there's nothing interesting in that. It is a disgusting picture. I connect it with my illness; and I think it is the kind of thing that would make any one half mad, if they only looked at it often enough. Tell them to burn it; and come away, come to the next room; I can't say what I want here.'

Sir Bale seemed to grow more and more agitated the longer he remained in the room. He seemed to her both frightened and furious; and taking her a little roughly by the wrist, he led her through the door.

When they were in another apartment alone, he again asked the affrighted lady who had told her that picture was there, and who told her to clean it.

She had only the truth to plead. It was, from beginning to end, the merest accident.

'If I thought, Janet, that you were taking counsel of others, talking me over, and trying clever experiments—' he stopped short with his eyes fixed on hers with black suspicion.

His wife's answer was one pleading look, and to burst into tears.

Sir Bale let-go her wrist, which he had held up to this; and placing his hand gently on her shoulder, he said, 'You must not cry, Janet; I have given you no excuse for tears. I only wished an answer to a very harmless question; and I am sure you would tell me, if by any chance you have lately seen Philip Feltram; he is capable of arranging all that. No one knows him as I do. There, you must not cry any more; but tell me truly, has he turned up? is he at Faxwell?'

She denied all this with perfect truth; and after a hesitation of some time, the matter ended. And so soon as she and he were more themselves, he had something quite different to tell her.

'Sit down, Janet; sit down, and forget that vile picture and all I have been saying. What I came to tell you, I think you will like; I am sure it will please you.'

And with this little preface he placed his arm about her neck, and kissed her tenderly. She certainly was pleased; and when his little speech was over, she, smiling, with her tears still wet upon her cheeks, put her arms round her husband's neck, and in turn kissed him with the ardour of gratitude, kissed him affectionately; again and again thanking him all the time.

It was no great matter, but from Sir Bale Mardykes it was something quite unusual.

Was it a sudden whim? what was it? Something had prompted Sir Bale, early in that dark shrewd month of December, to tell his wife that he wished to call together some of his county acquaintances, and to fill his house for a week or so, as near Christmas as she could get them to come. He wished her sisters—Lady Haworth (with her husband) and the Dowager Lady Walsingham—to be invited for an early day, before the coming of the other guests, so that she might enjoy their society for a little time quietly to herself before the less intimate guests should assemble.

Glad was Lady Mardykes to hear the resolve of her husband, and prompt to obey. She wrote to her sisters to beg of them to arrange to come together by the tenth or twelfth of the month, which they accordingly arranged to do. Sir Oliver, it is true, could not be of the party. A minister of state was drinking the waters at Bath; and Sir Oliver thought it would do him no harm to sip a little also, and his fashionable doctor politely agreed, and 'ordered' to those therapeutic springs the knight of the shire, who was 'consumedly vexed' to lose the Christmas with that jolly dog, Bale, down at Mardykes Hall. But a fellow must have a stomach for his Christmas pudding, and politics takes it out of a fellow deucedly; and health's the first thing, egad!

So Sir Oliver went down to Bath, and I don't know that he tippled much of the waters, but he did drink the burgundy of that haunt of the ailing; and he had the honour of making a fourth not unfrequently in the secretary of state's whist-parties.

It was about the 8th of December when, in Lady Walsingham's carriage, intending to post all the way, that lady, still young, and Lady Haworth, with all the servants that were usual in such expeditions in those days, started from the great Dower House at Islington in high spirits.

Lady Haworth had not been very well—low and nervous; but the clear frosty sun, and the pleasant nature of the excursion, raised her spirits to the point of enjoyment; and expecting nothing but happiness and gaiety—for, after all, Sir Bale was but one of a large party, and even he could make an effort and be agreeable as well as hospitable on occasion—they set out on their northward expedition. The journey, which is a long one, they had resolved to break into a four days' progress; and the inns had been written to, bespeaking a comfortable reception.

CHAPTER XXV.

THROUGH THE WALL.

On the third night they put-up at the comfortable old inn called the Three Nuns. With an effort they might easily have pushed on to Mardykes Hall that night, for the distance is not more than five-and-thirty miles. But, considering her sister's health, Lady Walsingham in planning their route had resolved against anything like a forced march.

Here the ladies took possession of the best sitting-room; and, notwithstanding the fatigue of the journey, Lady Haworth sat up with her sister till near ten o'clock, chatting gaily about a thousand things.

Of the three sisters, Lady Walsingham was the eldest. She had been in the habit of taking the command at home; and now, for advice and decision, her younger sisters, less prompt and courageous than she, were wont, whenever in her neighbourhood, to throw upon her all the cares and agitations of determining what was best to be done in small things and great. It is only fair to say, in addition, that this submission was not by any means exacted; it was the deference of early habit and feebler will, for she was neither officious nor imperious.

It was now time that Lady Haworth, a good deal more fatigued than her sister, should take leave of her for the night.

Accordingly they kissed and bid each other good-night; and Lady Walsingham, not yet disposed to sleep, sat for some time longer in the comfortable room where they had taken their tea, amusing the time with the book that had, when conversation flagged, beguiled the weariness of the journey. Her sister had been in her room nearly an hour, when she became herself a little sleepy. She had lighted her candle, and was going to ring for her maid, when, to her surprise, the door opened, and her sister Lady Haworth entered in a dressing-gown, looking frightened.

'My darling Mary!' exclaimed Lady Walsingham, 'what is the matter? are you well?'

'Yes, darling,' she answered, 'quite well; that is, I don't know what is the matter—I'm frightened.' She paused, listening, with her eyes turned towards the wall. 'O, darling Maud, I am so frightened! I don't know what it can be.'

'You must not be agitated, darling; there's nothing. You have been asleep, and I suppose you have had a dream. Were you asleep?'

Lady Haworth had caught her sister fast by the arm with both her hands, and was looking wildly in her face.

'Have *you* heard nothing?' she asked, again looking towards the wall of the room, as if she expected to hear a voice through it.

'Nonsense, darling; you are dreaming still. Nothing; there has been nothing to hear. I have been awake ever since; if there had been anything to hear, I could not have missed it. Come, sit down. Sip a little of this water; you are nervous, and over-tired; and tell me plainly, like a good little soul, what is the matter; for nothing has happened here; and you ought to know that the Three Nuns is the quietest house in England; and I'm no witch, and if you won't tell me what's the matter, I can't divine it.'

'Yes, of course,' said Mary, sitting down, and glancing round her wildly. 'I don't hear it now; *you* don't?'

'Do, my dear Mary, tell me what you mean,' said Lady Walsingham kindly but firmly.

Lady Haworth was holding the still untasted glass of water in her hand.

'Yes, I'll tell you; I have been so frightened! You are right; I had a dream, but I can scarcely remember anything of it, except the very end of it, when I wakened. But it was not the dream; only it was connected with what terrified me so. I was so tired when I went to bed, I thought I should have slept very soundly; and indeed I fell asleep immediately, and I must have slept quietly for a good while. How long is it since I left you?'

'More than an hour.'

'Yes, I must have slept a good while; for I don't think I have been ten minutes awake. How my dream began I don't know. I remember only that gradually it came to this: I was standing in a recess in a panelled gallery; it was lofty, and, I thought, belonged to a handsome but old-fashioned house. I was looking straight towards the head of a wide staircase, with a great oak banister. At the top of the stairs, as near to me, about, as that window there, was a thick short column of oak, on top of which was a candlestick. There was no other light but from that one candle; and there was a lady standing beside it, looking down the stairs, with her back turned towards me; and from her gestures I should have thought speaking to people on a lower lobby, but whom from my place I could not see. I soon perceived that this lady was in great agony of mind; for she beat her breast and wrung her hands every now and then, and wagged her head slightly from side to side, like a person in great distraction. But one word she said I could not hear. Nor when she struck her hand on the banister, or stamped, as she seemed to do in her pain, upon the floor, could I hear any sound. I found myself somehow waiting upon this lady, and was watching her with awe and sympathy. But who she was I knew not, until turning towards me I plainly saw Janet's face, pale and covered with tears, and with such a look of agony as—O God!—I can never forget.'

'Pshaw! Mary darling, what is it but a dream! I have had a thousand more startling; it is only that you are so nervous just now.'

'But that is not all—nothing; what followed is so dreadful; for either there is something very horrible going on at Mardykes, or else I am losing my reason,' said Lady Haworth in increasing agitation. 'I wakened instantly in great alarm, but I suppose no more than I have felt a hundred times on awakening from a frightful dream. I sat up in my bed; I was thinking of ringing for Winnefred, my heart was beating so, but feeling better soon I changed my mind. All this time I heard a faint sound of a voice, as if coming through a thick wall. It came from the wall at the left side of my bed, and I fancied was that of some woman lamenting in a room separated from me by that thick partition. I could only perceive that it was a sound of crying mingled with ejaculations of misery, or fear, or entreaty. I listened with a painful curiosity, wondering who it could be, and what could have happened in the neighbouring rooms of the house; and as I looked and listened, I could distinguish my own name, but at first nothing more. That, of course, might have been an accident; and I knew there were many Marys in the world besides myself. But it made me more curious; and a strange thing struck me, for I was now looking at that very wall through which the sounds were coming. I saw that there was a window in it. Thinking that the rest of the wall might nevertheless be covered by another room, I drew the curtain of it and looked out. But there is no such thing. It is the outer wall the entire way along. And it is equally impossible of the other wall, for it is to the front of the house, and has two windows in it; and the wall that the head of my bed stands against has the gallery outside it all the way; for I remarked that as I came to you.'

'Tut, tut, Mary darling, nothing on earth is so deceptive as sound; this and fancy account for everything.'

'But hear me out, darling; I have not told you all. I began to hear the voice more clearly, and at last quite distinctly. It was

Janet's, and she was conjuring you by name, as well as me, to come to her to Mardykes, without delay, in her extremity; yes, *you*, just as vehemently as me. It was Janet's voice. It still seemed separated by the wall, but I heard every syllable now; and I never heard voice or words of such anguish. She was imploring of us to come on, without a moment's delay, to Mardykes; and crying that, if we were not with her, she should go mad.'

'Well, darling,' said Lady Walsingham, 'you see I'm included in this invitation as well as you, and should hate to disappoint Janet just as much; and I do assure you, in the morning you will laugh over this fancy with me; or rather, she will laugh over it with us, when we get to Mardykes. What you do want is rest, and a little sal-volatile.'

So saying she rang the bell for Lady Haworth's maid. Having comforted her sister, and made her take the nervous specific she recommended, she went with her to her room; and taking possession of the arm-chair by the fire, she told her that she would keep her company until she was fast asleep, and remain long enough to be sure that the sleep was not likely to be interrupted. Lady Haworth had not been ten minutes in her bed, when she raised herself with a start to her elbow, listening with parted lips and wild eyes, her trembling fingers behind her ears. With an exclamation of horror, she cried,

'There it is again, upbraiding us! I can't stay longer.'

She sprang from the bed, and rang the bell violently.

'Maud,' she cried in an ecstasy of horror, 'nothing shall keep me here, whether you go or not. I will set out the moment the horses are put to. If you refuse to come, Maud, mind the responsibility is yours—listen!' and with white face and starting eyes she pointed to the wall. 'Have you ears? don't you hear?'

The sight of a person in extremity of terror so mysterious, might have unnerved a ruder system than Lady Walsingham's. She was pale as she replied; for under certain circumstances those terrors which deal with the supernatural are more contagious than any others. Lady Walsingham still, in terms, held to her opinion; but the panic had touched her, and although she tried to smile, her face showed it.

'Well, dear Mary,' she said, 'as you will have it so, I see no good in resisting you longer. Here, it is plain, your nerves will not suffer you to rest. Let us go then, in heaven's name; and when you get to Mardykes Hall you will be relieved.'

All this time Lady Haworth was getting on her things, with the careless hurry of a person about to fly for her life; and Lady Walsingham issued her orders for horses, and the general preparations for resuming the journey.

It was now between ten and eleven; but the servant who rode armed with them, according to the not unnecessary usage of the times, thought that with a little judicious bribing of postboys they might easily reach Mardykes Hall before three o'clock in the morning.

When the party set forward again, Lady Haworth was comparatively tranquil. She no longer heard the unearthly mimickry of her sister's voice; there remained only the fear and suspense which that illusion or visitation had produced.

Her sister, Lady Walsingham, after a brief effort to induce something like conversation, became silent. A thin sheet of snow had covered the darkened landscape, and some light flakes were still dropping. Lady Walsingham struck her repeater often in the dark, and inquired the distances frequently. She was anxious to get over the ground, though by no means fatigued. Something of the anxiety that lay heavy at her sister's heart had touched her own.

CHAPTER XXVI.

PERPLEXED.

THE roads even then were good, and very good horses the posting-houses turned out; so that by dint of extra pay the rapid rate of travelling undertaken by the servant was fully accomplished in the first two or three stages.

While Lady Walsingham was continually striking her repeater in her ear, and as they neared their destination, growing in spite of herself more anxious, her sister's uneasiness showed itself in a less reserved way; for, cold as it was, with snowflakes actually dropping, Lady Haworth's head was perpetually out at the window, and when she drew it up, sitting again in her place, she would audibly express her alarms, and apply to her sister for consolation and confidence in her suspense.

Under its thin carpet of snow, the pretty village of Golden Friars looked strangely to their eyes. It had long been fast asleep, and both ladies were excited as they drew up at the steps of the George and Dragon, and with bell and knocker roused the slumbering household.

What tidings awaited them here? In a very few minutes the door was opened, and the porter staggered down, after a word with the driver, to the carriage-window, not half awake.

'Is Lady Mardykes well?' demanded Lady Walsingham.

'Is Sir Bale well?'

'Are all the people at Mardykes Hall quite well?'

With clasped hands Lady Haworth listened to the successive answers of these questions which her sister hastily put. The answers were all satisfactory. With a great sigh and a little laugh, Lady Walsingham placed her hand affectionately on that of her sister; who, saying, 'God be thanked!' began to weep.

'When had you last news from Mardykes?' asked Lady Walsingham.

'A servant was down here about four o'clock.'

'O! no one since?' said she in a disappointed tone.

No one had been from the great house since, but all were well then.

'They are early people, you know, dear; and it is dark at four, and that is as late as they could well have heard, and nothing could have happened since—very unlikely. We have come very fast; it is only a few minutes past two, darling.'

But each felt the chill and load of their returning anxiety.

While the people at the George were rapidly getting a team of horses to, Lady Walsingham contrived a moment for an order from the other window to her servant, who knew Golden Friars perfectly, to knock-up the people at Doctor Torvey's, and to inquire whether all were well at Mardykes Hall.

There he learned that a messenger had come for Doctor Torvey at ten o'clock, and that the Doctor had not returned since. There was no news, however, of any one's being ill; and the Doctor himself did not know what he was wanted about. While Lady Haworth was talking to her maid from the window next the steps, Lady Walsingham was, unobserved, receiving this information at the other.

It made her very uncomfortable.

In a few minutes more, however, with a team of fresh horses, they were again rapidly passing the distance between them and Mardykes Hall.

About two miles on, their drivers pulled-up, and they heard a voice talking with them from the roadside. A servant from the Hall had been sent with a note for Lady Walsingham, and had been ordered, if necessary, to ride the whole way to the Three Nuns to deliver it. The note was already in Lady Walsingham's hand; her sister sat beside her, and with the corner of the open note in her fingers, she read it breathlessly at the same time by the light of a carriage-lamp which the man held to the window. It said:

'My dearest love—my darling sister—dear sisters both!—in God's name, lose not a moment. I am so overpowered and *terrified*. I cannot explain; I can only implore of you to come with all the haste you can make. Waste no time, darlings. I hardly understand what I write. Only this, dear sisters; I feel that my reason will desert me, unless you come soon. You will not fail me now. Your poor distracted JANET.'

The sisters exchanged a pale glance, and Lady Haworth grasped her sister's hand.

'Where is the messenger?' asked Lady Walsingham.

A mounted servant came to the window.

'Is any one ill at home?' she asked.

'No, all were well—my lady, and Sir Bale—no one sick.'

'But the Doctor was sent for; what was that for?'

'I can't say, my lady.'

'You are quite certain that no one—think—*no* one is ill?'

'There is no one ill at the Hall, my lady, that I have heard of.'

'Is Lady Mardykes, my sister, still up?'

'Yes, my lady; and has her maid with her.'

'And Sir Bale, are you certain he is quite well?'

'Sir Bale is quite well, my lady; he has been busy settling papers to-night, and was as well as usual.'

'That will do, thanks,' said the perplexed lady; and to her own servant she added,

'On to Mardykes Hall with all the speed they can make. I'll pay them well, tell them.'

And in another minute they were gliding along the road at a pace which the muffled beating of the horses' hoofs on the thin sheet of snow that covered the road showed to have broken out of the conventional trot, and to resemble something more like a gallop.

And now they were under the huge trees, that looked black as hearse-plumes in contrast with the snow. The cold gleam of the lake in the moon which had begun to shine out now met their gaze; and the familiar outline of Snakes Island, its solemn timber bleak and leafless, standing in a group, seemed to watch Mardykes Hall with a dismal observation across the water. Through the gate and between the huge files of trees the carriage seemed to fly; and at last the steaming horses stood panting, nodding and snorting, before the steps in the courtyard.

There was a light in an upper window, and a faint light in the hall, the door of which was opened; and an old servant came down and ushered the ladies into the house.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE HOUR.

LIGHTLY they stepped over the snow that lay upon the broad steps, and entering the door saw the dim figure of their sister, already in the large and faintly-lighted hall. One candle in the hand of her scared maid, and one burning on the table, leaving the distant parts of that great apartment in total darkness, touched the figures with the odd sharp lights in which Schalken delighted; and a streak of chilly moonlight, through the open door, fell upon the floor, and was stretched like a white sheet at her feet. Lady Mardykes, with an exclamation of agitated relief, threw her arms, in turn, round the necks of her sisters, and hugging them, kissed them again and again, murmuring her thanks, calling them her 'blessed sisters,' and praising God for his mercy in having sent them to her in time, and altogether in a rapture of agitation and gratitude.

Taking them each by a hand, she led them into a large room, on whose panels they could see the faint twinkle of the tall gilded frames, and the darker indication of the old portraits, in which that interesting house abounds. The moonbeams, entering obliquely through the Tudor stone-shafts of the window and thrown upon the floor, reflected an imperfect light; and the candle which the maid who followed her mistress held in her hand shone dimly from the sideboard, where she placed it. Lady Mardykes told her that she need not wait.

'They don't know; they know only that we are in some great confusion; but—God have mercy on me!—nothing of the reality. Sit down, darlings; you are tired.'

She sat down between them on a sofa, holding a hand of each. They sat opposite the window, through which appeared the magnificent view commanded from the front of the house: in the foreground the solemn trees of Snakes Island, one great branch stretching upward, bare and moveless, from the side, like an arm raised to heaven in wonder or in menace towards the house; the lake, in part swept by the icy splendour of the moon, trembling with a dazzling glimmer, and farther off lost in blackness; the Fells rising from a base of gloom, into ribs and peaks white with snow, and looking against the pale sky, thin and transparent as a haze. Right across to the storied woods of Cloostedd, and the old domains of the Feltrams, this view extended.

Thus alone, their mufflers still on, their hands clasped in hers, they breathlessly listened to her strange tale.

Connectedly told it amounted to this:

Sir Bale seemed to have been relieved of some great anxiety about the time when, ten days before, he had told her to invite her friends to Mardykes Hall. This morning he had gone out for a walk with Trevor, his under-steward, to talk over some plans about thinning the woods at this side; and also to discuss practically a proposal, lately made by a wealthy merchant, to take a very long lease, on advantageous terms to Sir Bale as he thought, of the old park and chase of Cloostedd, with the intention of building there, and making it once more a handsome residence.

In the improved state of his spirits, Sir Bale had taken a shrewd interest in this negotiation; and was actually persuaded to cross the lake that morning with his adviser, and to walk over the grounds with him.

Sir Bale had seemed unusually well, and talked with great animation. He was more like a young man who had just attained his majority, and for the first time grasped his estates, than the grim elderly Baronet who had been moping about Mardykes, and as much afraid as a cat of the water, for so many years.

As they returned to the boat, at the roots of that same scathed elm whose barkless bough had seemed, in his former visit to this old wood, to beckon him from a distance, like a skeleton arm, to enter the forest, he and his companion on a sudden missed an old map of the grounds which they had been consulting.

'We must have left it in the corner tower of Cloostedd House, which commands that view of the grounds, you remember; it would not do to lose it. It is the most accurate thing we have. I'll sit down here and rest a little till you come back.'

The man was absent little more than twenty minutes. When he returned he found that Sir Bale had changed his position, and was now walking to and fro, around and about, in what at a distance he fancied was mere impatience, on the open space a couple of hundred paces nearer to the turn in the valley towards the boat. It was not impatience. He was very much agitated. He looked very pale, and he took his companion's arm—a thing he had never thought of doing before—and said,

'Let us get away quickly. I've something to tell at home, and —I forgot it.'

Not another word did Sir Bale exchange with his companion. He sat in the stern of the boat, gloomy as a man about to glide under traitor's-gate. He entered his house in the same sombre and agitated state. He entered his library, and sat for a long time as if stunned.

At last he seemed to have made-up his mind to something; and applied himself quietly and diligently to arranging papers, docketing some and burning others. Dinner-time arrived. He sent to tell Lady Mardykes that he should not join her at dinner, but would see her afterwards.

'It was between eight and nine, I forget the exact time, when he came to the tower drawing-room where I was. I did not hear his approach. There is a stone stair, with a thick carpet on it. He told me he wished to speak to me there. It is an out-of-the-way place—a small old room with very thick walls, and there is a double door, the inner one of oak—I suppose he wished to guard against being overheard.

'There was a look in his face that frightened me; I saw he had something dreadful to tell. He looked like a man on whom a lot had fallen to put some one to death,' said Lady Mardykes. 'O, my poor Bale! my husband, my husband! My God! he knew what it would be to me.'

Here she broke into the wildest weeping, and it was some time before she resumed.

'He seemed very kind and very calm,' she said at last; 'he said but little; and, I think, these were his words: "I find, Janet, I have made a great miscalculation—I thought my hour of danger had passed. We have been many years together, but a parting must sooner or later be, and my time has come."

'I don't know what I said. I would not have so much minded—for I could not have believed, if I had not seen him—but there was that in his look and tone which no one could doubt.

"I shall die before to-morrow morning," he said. "You must command yourself, Janet; it can't be altered now."

"O, Bale," I cried, nearly distracted, "you would not kill yourself!"

"Kill myself! poor child! no, indeed," he said; "it is simply that I must die. No violent death—nothing but the common subsidence of life—I have made up my mind; what happens to everybody can't be so very bad; and millions of worse men than I die every year. You must not follow me to my room, darling; I shall see you by and by."

'His language was collected and even cold; but his face looked as if it was cut in stone; you never saw, in a dream, a face like it.'

Lady Walsingham here said,

'I am certain he is ill; he's in a fever. You must not distract and torture yourself about his predictions. You sent for Doctor Torvey; what did he say?'

'I could not tell him all.'

'O, no; I don't mean that; they'd only say he was mad, and we little better for minding what he says. But did the Doctor see him? and what did he say of his health?'

'Yes; he says there is nothing wrong—no fever—nothing whatever. Poor Bale has been so kind; he saw him to please me,' she sobbed again wildly. 'I wrote to implore of him. It was my last hope, strange as it seems; and O, would to God I could think it! But there is nothing of that kind. Wait till you have seen him. There is a frightful calmness about all he says and does; and his directions are all so clear, and his mind so perfectly collected, it is quite impossible.'

And poor Lady Mardykes again burst into a frantic agony of tears.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SIR BALE IN THE GALLERY.

'Now, Janet darling, you are yourself low and nervous, and you treat this fancy of Bale's as seriously as he does himself. The truth is, he is a hypochondriac, as the doctors say; and you will find that I am right; he will be quite well in the morning, and I daresay a little ashamed of himself for having frightened his poor little wife as he has. I will sit up with you. But our poor Mary is not, you know, very strong; and she ought to lie down and rest a little. Suppose you give me a cup of tea in the drawing-room. I will run up to my room and get these things off, and meet you in the drawing-room; or, if you like it better, you can sit with me in my own room; and for goodness' sake let us have candles enough, and a bright fire; and I promise you, if you will only exert your own good sense, you shall be a great deal more cheerful in a very little time.'

Lady Walsingham's address was kind and cheery, and her air confident. For a moment a ray of hope returned, and her sister Janet acknowledged at least the possibility of her theory. But if confidence is contagious, so also is panic; and Lady Walsingham experienced a sinking of the heart which she dared not confess to her sister, and vainly strove to combat.

Lady Walsingham went up with her sister Mary, and having seen her in her room, and spoken again to her in the same cheery tone in which she had lectured her sister Lady Mardykes, she went on; and having taken possession of her own room, and put off her cloaks and shawls, she was going downstairs again, when she heard Sir Bale's voice, as he approached along the gallery, issuing orders to a servant, as it seemed, exactly in his usual tone.

She turned, with a strange throb at her heart, and met him.

A little sterner, a little paler than usual he looked; she could perceive no other change. He took her hand kindly and held it, as with dilated eyes he looked with a dark inquiry for a moment in her face. He signed to the servant to go on, and said, 'I'm glad you have come, Maud. You have heard what is to happen; and I don't know how Janet could have borne it without your support. You did right to come; and you'll stay with her for a day or two, and take her away from this place as soon as you can.'

She looked at him with the embarrassment of fear. He was speaking to her with the calmness of a leave-taking in the press-room — the serenity that overlies the greatest awe and agony of which human nature is capable.

'I am glad to see you, Bale,' she began, hardly knowing what she said, and she stopped short.

'You are come, it turns out, on a sad mission,' he resumed; 'you find all in confusion. Poor Janet! it is a blow to her. I shall not live to see to-morrow's sunshine.'

'Come,' she said, startled, 'you must not talk so. No, Bale, you have no right to speak so; you can have no reason to justify it. It is cruel and wicked to trifle with your wife's feelings. If you are under a delusion, you must make an effort and shake it off, or, at least, cease to talk of it. You are not well; I know by your looks you are ill; but I am very certain we shall see you much better to-morrow, and still better the day following.'

'No, I'm not ill, sister. Feel that pulse, if you doubt me;

there is no fever in it. I never was more perfectly in health; and yet I know that before the clock, that has just struck three, shall have struck five, I, who am talking to you, shall be dead.'

Lady Walsingham was frightened, and her fear irritated her.

'I have told you what I think and believe,' she said vehemently. 'I think it wrong and cowardly to torture my poor sister with your whimsical predictions. Look into your own mind, and you will see you have absolutely no reason to support what you say. How *can* you inflict all this agony upon a poor creature foolish enough to love you as she does, and weak enough to believe in your idle dreams?'

'Stay, sister; it is not a matter to be debated so. If to-morrow I can hear you, it will be time enough to upbraid me. Pray return now to your sister; she needs all you can do for her. She is much to be pitied; her sufferings afflict me. I shall see you and her again before my death. It would have been more cruel to leave her unprepared. Do all in your power to nerve and tranquillise her. What is past cannot now be helped.'

He paused, looking hard at her, as if he had half made up his mind to say something more. But if there was a question of the kind, it was determined in favour of silence.

He dropped her hand, turned quickly, and left her.

Chapter XXIX.

DR. TORVEY'S OPINION.

When Lady Walsingham reached the head of the stairs, she met her maid, and from her learned that her sister, Lady Mardykes, was downstairs in the same room. On approaching she heard her sister Mary's voice talking with her, and found them together. Mary, finding that she could not sleep, had put on her clothes again, and come down to keep her sister company. The room looked more comfortable now. There were candles lighted, and a good fire burned in the grate; tea-things stood on a little table near the fire, and the two sisters were talking; Lady Mardykes appearing more collected, and only they two in the room.

'Have you seen him, Maud?' cried Lady Mardykes, rising and hastily approaching her the moment she entered.

'Yes, dear; and talked with him, and—'

'Well?'

'And I think very much as I did before. I think he is nervous; he says he is not ill; but he is nervous and whimsical, and as men always are when they happen to be out of sorts, very positive; and of course the only thing that can quite undeceive him is the lapse of the time he has fixed for his prediction, as it is sure to pass without any tragic result of any sort. We shall then all see alike the nature of his delusion.'

'O, Maud, if I were only sure you thought so! if I were sure you really had hopes! Tell me, Maud, for God's sake, what you really think.'

Lady Walsingham was a little disconcerted by the unexpected earnestness of this direct appeal.

'Come, darling, you must not be foolish,' she said; 'we can only talk of impressions, and we are imposed upon by the solemnity of his manner, and the fact that he evidently believes in his own delusion; every one does believe in his own delusion—there is nothing strange in that.'

'O, Maud darling, I see you are not convinced; you are only trying to comfort me. You have no hope—none, none, none;' and she covered her face with her hands, and wept again convulsively.

Lady Walsingham was silent for a moment, and then with an effort said, as she placed her hand on her sister's arm,

'You see, dear Janet, there is no use in my saying the same thing over and over again; an hour or two will show who is right. Sit down again, darling, and be like yourself. My maid told me that you had sent to the parlour for Doctor Torvey; he must not find you so. What would he think? Unless you mean to tell him of Bale's strange fancy; and a pretty story that would be to set afloat in Golden Friars. I think I hear him coming.'

So, in effect, he was. Doctor Torvey—with the florid gravity of a man who, having just swallowed a bottle of port, besides some glasses of sherry, is admitted to the presence of ladies whom he respects—entered the room, made what he called his 'leg and his compliments,' and awaited the ladies' commands.

'Sit down, Doctor Torvey,' said Lady Walsingham, who in the incapacity of her sister undertook the doing of the honours. 'My sister, Lady Mardykes, has got it into her head somehow that Sir Bale is ill. I have been speaking to him; he certainly does not look very well, but he says he is quite well. Do you think him well?—that is, we know you don't think there is anything of importance amiss—but she wishes to know whether you think him *perfectly* well.'

The Doctor cleared his voice and delivered his lecture, a little thickly at some words, upon Sir Bale's case; the result of which was that it was no case at all; and that if he would only live something more of a country gentleman's life, he would be as well as any man could desire—as well as any man, gentle or simple, in the country.

'The utmost I should think of doing for him would be, perhaps, a little quinine, nothing mo'—shurely—he is really and toory a very shoun' shtay of health.'

Lady Walsingham looked encouragingly at her sister and nodded.

'I've been shen' for, La'y Walsh—Walse—Walsing—*ham;* old

Jack Amerald—he likshe his glass o' port,' he said roguishly, 'and shuvversh accord'n'ly,' he continued, with a compassionating paddle of his right hand; 'one of thoshe aw—odd feels in his stomach; and as I have pretty well done all zhat I can man-n-'ge down here, I must be off, ye shee. Wind up from Golden Friars, and a little flutter ovv zhnow, thazh all;' and with some remarks about the extreme cold of the weather, and the severity of their night journey, and many respectful and polite parting speeches, the Doctor took his leave; and they soon heard the wheels of his gig and the tread of his horse, faint and muffled from the snow in the court-yard, and the Doctor, who had connected that melancholy and agitated household with the outer circle of humanity, was gone.

There was very little snow falling, half-a-dozen flakes now and again, and their flight across the window showed, as the Doctor had in a manner boasted, that the wind was in his face as he returned to Golden Friars. Even these desultory snow-flakes ceased, at times, altogether; and returning, as they say, 'by fits and starts,' left for long intervals the landscape, under the brilliant light of the moon, in its wide white shroud. The curtain of the great window had not been drawn. It seemed to Lady Walsingham that the moonbeams had grown more dazzling, that Snakes Island was nearer and more distinct, and the outstretched arm of the old tree looked wilder and ghastlier, like the uplifted arm of the spectator of a tragedy, who draws silently nearer as the catastrophe approaches.

Cold, dazzling, almost repulsive in this intense moonlight and white sheeting, the familiar landscape looked in the eyes of Lady Walsingham. The sisters gradually grew more and more silent, an unearthly suspense overhung them all, and Lady Mardykes rose every now and then and listened at the open door for step or voice in vain. They all were overpowered by the intenser horror that seemed gathering around them. And thus an hour or more passed.

Chapter XXX.

HUSH!

Pale and silent those three beautiful sisters sat. The horrible quietude of a suspense that had grown all but insupportable oppressed the guests of Lady Mardykes, and something like the numbness of despair had reduced her to the silence of a seeming apathy, the dreadful counterfeit of peace.

Sir Bale Mardykes on a sudden softly entered the room. Reflected from the floor near the window the white moonlight somehow gave to his fixed features the character of a smile. With a warning gesture, as he came in, he placed his finger to his lips, as if to enjoin silence; and then, having successively pressed the hands of his two sisters-in-law, he stooped over the almost fainting form of

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his wife, and twice pressed her cold forehead with his lips; and so, without a word, he passed softly from the room.

Some seconds elapsed before Lady Walsingham, recovering her presence of mind, with one of the candlesticks from the table in her hand, opened the door and followed.

She saw Sir Bale mount the last stair of the broad flight visible from the hall, and candle in hand turn the corner of the massive banister, and as the light thrown from his candle showed, he continued, without hurry, to ascend the second flight.

With the irrepressible curiosity of horror she continued to follow him at a distance.

She saw him enter his own private room, and close the door, and in a moment after she thought she heard him lock it within.

Continuing to follow she placed herself noiselessly at the door of the apartment, and in breathless silence, with a throbbing heart, listened for what should pass within.

She distinctly heard Sir Bale pace the floor up and down for some time, and then, after a pause, a sound as if some one had thrown himself heavily on the bed. A silence followed, during which her sisters, who had followed more timidly, joined her. She warned them with a look and gesture to be silent.

Lady Haworth stood a little behind, her white lips moving, and her hands clasped as if in a silent agony of prayer. Lady Mardykes leaned against the massive oak door-case.

With her hand raised to her ear, and her lips parted, Lady Walsingham listened for some seconds—for a minute, two minutes, three. At last, losing heart, she seized the handle in her panic, and turned it sharply. The door was locked on the inside, but some one close to it said from within, 'Hush, hush!'

Much alarmed now, the same lady knocked violently at the door. No answer was returned.

She knocked again more violently, and shook the door with all her fragile force. It was something of horror in her countenance as she did so, that, no doubt, terrified Lady Mardykes, who with a loud and long scream sank in a swoon upon the floor.

The servants, alarmed by these sounds, were speedily in the gallery. Lady Mardykes was carried to her room, and laid upon her bed; her sister, Lady Haworth, accompanying her. In the mean time the door was forced. Sir Bale Mardykes was found stretched upon his bed.

Those who have once seen it, will not mistake the aspect of death. Here, in Sir Bale Mardykes' room, in his bed, in his clothes, is a stranger, grim and awful; in a few days to be insupportable, and to pass alone into the prison-house, and to be seen no more.

Where is Sir Bale Mardykes now, whose roof-tree and whose place at board and bed will know him no more? Here lies a chapfallen, fish-eyed image, chilling already into clay, and stiffening in every joint.

There is a marble monument in the pretty church of Golden Friars. It stands at the left side of what antiquarians call 'the high altar.' Two pillars at each end support an arch with several armorial bearings on as many shields sculptured above. Beneath, on a marble flooring raised some six feet, with a cornice round, lies Sir Bale Mardykes, of Mardykes Hall, ninth Baronet of that ancient family, chiseled in marble with knee-breeches and buckled-shoes, and *ailles de pigeon*, and single-breasted coat and long waistcoat, ruffles and sword, such as gentlemen wore about the year 1770, and bearing a strong resemblance to the features of the second Charles. On the broad marble which forms the background is inscribed an epitaph, which has perpetuated to our times the estimate formed by his 'inconsolable widow,' the Dowager Lady Mardykes, of the virtues and accomplishments of her deceased lord.

Lady Walsingham would have qualified two or three of the more highly-coloured hyperboles, at which the Golden Friars of those days sniffed and tittered. They don't signify now; there is no contemporary left to laugh or whisper. And if there be not much that is true in the letter of that inscription, it at least perpetuates something that is true—that wonderful glorification of partisanship, the affection of an idolising wife.

Lady Mardykes, a few days after the funeral, left Mardykes Hall for ever. She lived a great deal with her sister, Lady Walsingham; and died, as a line cut at the foot of Sir Bale Mardykes' epitaph records, in the year 1790; her remains being laid beside those of her beloved husband in Golden Friars.

The estates had come to Sir Bale Mardykes free of entail. He had been pottering over a will, but it was never completed, nor even quite planned; and after much doubt and scrutiny, it was at last ascertained that, in default of a will and of issue, a clause in the marriage-settlement gave the entire estates to the Dowager Lady Mardykes.

By her will she bequeathed the estates to 'her cousin, also a kinsman of the late Sir Bale Mardykes her husband,' William Feltram, on condition of his assuming the name and arms of Mardykes, the arms of Feltram being quartered in the shield.

Thus was oddly fulfilled the prediction which Philip Feltram had repeated, that the estates of Mardykes were to pass into the hands of a Feltram.

About the year 1795 the baronetage was revived, and William Feltram enjoyed the title for fifteen years, as Sir William Mardykes.